BHAVABHUTI

G. K. BHAT



Makers of Indian Literature

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by

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Abbreviations (used in footnotes); MVC — Mahaviracharita; MM — Malatimadhava; URC — Uttararamacharita.

CHAPTER ONE

ABOUT THE POET

Family

MOST of the Sanskrit writers are very reticent about their personal and biographical details. The information that Bhavabhuti gives in the prologues of his two plays[1] is therefore very welcome. Bhavabhuti was born in a Brahmin family hailing from Padmapura in the Southern regions. The family belonged to the Taittiriya branch of Black Yajurveda. Their *gotra* was Kashyapa, and the family name, Udumbara. The epithet *charaṇa-guravaḥ* used for the members of the family suggests that they either conducted a Vedic school for the study of the particular branch of the Veda or were teachers of that branch[2]. It was a very devout family of Brahmins, observing religious vows, performing Soma sacrifices, and maintaining the five ritual fires uninterruptedly. The Vedic learning and pious disposition had won for the family a place of high honour.

In this family was born one Mahakavi who performed a Vajapeya sacrifice. Bhavabhuti was the fifth descendant from this famous ancestor. His grandfather was Bhatta Gopala, whose name was held in respect on account of his learning and conduct.

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1. *Mahaviracharita* and *Malatimadhava*.
2. ‘ चरणगुरवः ’, MVC. prelude. Jagaddhara in his comm. on MM. explains, ‘ चरणशब्दः शाखाविशेषाध्ययनजनसंघवाची ।’

Bhavabhuti's father Neelakantha too had acquired fame for holiness. Bhavabhuti's mother was Jatukarni.

Name

The Sanskrit commentators of Bhavabhuti's plays are inclined to take Shreekantha as the poet's personal name, on the analogy of his father's name Neelakantha, and treat Bhavabhuti as a kind of title or pen-name. Some stray verses in Sanskrit[3] connect the name Bhavabhuti, by punning connotation, with the poet; and another tradition explains that the poet was so called because he owed prosperity (*bhuti*) to the blessings of Shiva (*Bhava*)[4]. But the general scholarly opinion is that Shreekantha is a *biruda*, and Bhavabhuti, the name of the poet.

More seriously considered is the name Umbeka, also spelt as Umveka, Ubeyaka, Urreyaka and Omvaka. It is said that Umbeka was a famous Mimansaka and a pupil of Kumarila Bhatta. He wrote commentaries on Kumarila's *Slokavarttika* and on Mandanamisra's *Bhavanaviveka*. He refers to Kumarila as Bhattapada and Guru. A tradition also exists which identifies this Mimansaka Umbeka with the dramatist Bhavabhuti. Some of the considerations on which this identification is based are as follows: One manuscript of *Malatimadhava*, to which S. P. Pandit drew attention first, mentions the name of Umveka, pupil of Kumarila, as the author of the drama, in the colophons to acts III and VI[5]. In a manuscript of Umbeka's commentary on *Slokavarttika*, the stanza *ye nāma kechid iha naḥ* is quoted in the beginning: this is identical with Bhavabhuti's verse in the prelude to *Malatimadhava*. The *Tattvapradipika* of Chitsukhacharya (known as *Chitsukhi*) refers to *Malatimadhava* and other dramatic compositions of Bhavabhuti and the commentary *Nayanaprasadini*

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3. Viraraghava mentions : साम्बा पुनातु भवभूतिपवित्रमूर्तिः ।
 Anantapandita cites : गिरिजायाः कुचौ वन्दे भवभूतिसिताननौ ।
 Shridharadasa quotes in *Saduktikarnamrita* :

 कां तपस्वी गतोऽवस्थामिति स्मेराविव स्तनौ ।
 वन्दे गौरीघनाश्लेषभवभूतिसिताननौ ॥

4. See Kunhan Raja ; *Survey of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 183.
5. S. P. Pandit, Intr. to *Gaudavaho*, Bombay Sanskrit Series.

on it adds that Bhavabhuti is Umbeka. Ghanashyama, the commentator of *Uttararamacharita*, regards Bhavabhuti as of Dravida origin from certain turns of expression, thereby confirming Bhavabhuti-Umbeka identity.

Other scholars do not think that the evidence is conclusive to establish the identity. The name of Umbeka appearing in a single manuscript, that too for two acts in the colophon, is doubtful The verse *ye nāma*..is quite relevant to Bhavabhuti's drama, but it has no place in Umbeka's Mimansa commentary and may have been added by some one else who believed in the tradition of the two author's identity. Further, Bhavabhuti's Shastric background is beyond doubt; but he appears to be more a Vedantin than a Mimansaka[6].

In the face of such controversy, it is better to keep an open mind on the issue. The name Udumbara which figures in the poet's biographical statement is, we are told, a family name (surname) derived from the *place*. Mirashi identifies Udumbara with Umerkhed on the north bank of Painaganga in Yeotma district.

Native place

Bhavabhuti mentions, in the prologue of his *Mahaviracharita*, Padmapura (or Padmanagara) in the Southern country as the birthplace of his family. *Malatimadhava* mentions Padmavati where the scenes of the play are laid. A Sanskrit commentator supposes that this city is outside Vidarbha. The phrase Dakshinapatha (Southern country) appears to be vague.

The first attempt to locate Padmavati historically was made by Gen. Cunningham who identified it with Pavaya or Padmapavaya, a village adjacent to Narwar, on the river Sindhu and

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6. For details consult : Kane : URC (ed.), Intr., pp. xii-xvi; Karmarkar : *Bhavabhuti*, Karnatak University Extension Lectures Series – 5, pp. 8-9; Belwalkar : *Later History of Rama* : Harvard University, Intr.; Harshe : *Observations on the life and literature of Bhavabhuti* (French), France, pp. 19 ff.; C. Kunhan Raja : *Shlokavartikavyakhya* of Bhatta Umbeka, Madras University Sanskrit Series, No. 13, Intr. pp. XXI ff.; Mirashi : *Samshodhana Muktavali*, Strand III (Marathi) and *Bhavabhuti*; my *Uttararamacharita*, Intr. pp.4-9.

near Para (Parvati) river, in Gwalior state. Dr. Bhandarkar pointed out that Dakshinapatha was a wider term and included both the Berars and Maharashtra. Bhavabhuti could have been a Southerner and may have migrated to Chanda or Chandrapura in Nagpur division, which answers the description of Padmavati. It is not necessary for one to be a native in order to be able to give a detailed description of a place and, as such, Padmapura as the poete's native place and Padmavati as the scene of dramatic action need not be identical. Accepting these conclusions Mirashi identifies the poet's native place with Padmapura in Bhandara district of Nagpur-Vidarbha province. He supports this identification on the basis of a copper plate issued by Vakataka kings who had Padmapura as one of their capitals. He argues that the political upheavals, family fortunes of Bhavabhuti, archaeological finds of two temples and an image of Shiva, existence of Brahmin families of Taittiriya branch near the present Padmapura, all corroborate such an identification[7]. However, difference of opinion still exists and we must await further research.

Kalapriyanatha

Another problem in identity is of the deity Kalapriyanatha, mentioned in the dramatic prologues and at whose festival the plays of Bhavabhuti were produced. The Sanskrit commentators understand Kalapriya as Ambika or Parvati and Kalapriyanatha as Shiva. Modern commentators take it as the famous Mahakala of Ujjayini. But this is not correct as Mahakala was never known by this name. Mr. Lele first identified Kalapriyanatha with Kalpi (to the south of Yamuna)[8]. Mirashi offers strong grounds to support this identification. Krishna's son Samba, cursed with leprosy, was cured of this disease by the blessings of the Sun deity. According to the Puranic legend, the deity promised to reside in three places: Konarka in the east, Mulasthana (Multan) in the west, and Kalpi to the south of Yamuna. Rajashekhara, who mentions Kalapriya by name, states that this place is to the

7. Mirashi : *Samshodhana Muktavali*, Strand I (pp. 76-94), Strand II (pp. 67-76); also his *Bhavabhuti*.

8. *Malatimadhava*, *Sara va vichara* (Marathi), p. 5.

south of Gadhipura (Kanoj), and it can be identified with Kalpi on the river Yamuna. Kalapriyanatha, thus, means the deity of Kalapriya or Kalpi, which is Sun. The copper plates found at Cambay and Sangli of Govind IV, the son of the Rashtrakuta King Indra III, mention the overrunning of Kanoj in 915 A. D. and the halting of the vast army in the quadrangle of Kalapriya. The existence of such an open area just fits the assemblage of audience gathered to witness the performance of Bhavabhuti's plays. *Malatimadhava* contains a verse (I. 3) which is in praise of Sun. Rajashekhara's reference implies that Bhavabhuti's fame as dramatist reached from Kalapriya-Kalpi to Kanoj, which led the way for his patronage by Yashovarman, the King of Kanoj. Instead of identifying Kalapriyanatha with Shiva, either as Mahakala of Ujjayini or as the Shivalinga Suvarnabindu, situated on the confluence of the rivers Madhumati and Para mentioned in one of the plays, there is more cogent reason to accept the identification of Kalapriyanatha with Sun[9].

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9. See, Mirashi : *op.cit.* Strand I (pp. 95-103), Strand III (pp.35-40); Karmarkar, *Bhavabhuti*, (pp. 6-7); my *Uttararamacharita*, Introduction, pp. 13-17.

CHAPTER TWO

BHAVABHUTI'S WORKS AND LITERARY ASSOCIATIONS

IT is quite likely that Bhavabhuti must have written several works which are now lost to us. The Sanskrit Anthologies quote a large number of verses as coming from Bhavabhuti which are not found in his three dramas. Vakpatiraja, in his *Gaudavaho* (verse 799) refers to Bhavabhuti's 'ocean-like writing which inspires narrative compositions'. *Chitsukhi*, to which a reference was made in the previous section, says, Bhavabhuti whose writing was held authoritative before does not lose authority merely by the composition of *nataka*, *natika* etc'[1]. This expression will have no propriety unless we assume that Bhavabhuti had written other literary works like *natikas* and authoritative works on shastras[2]. In the *Malatimadhava* Bhavabhuti refers to the study of Vedas, Upanishads, Samkhya. In the *Mahaviracharita* he mentions his guru's name as Jnananidhi ('Treasure of knowledge') whom he describes as the foremost Paramahamsa. Bhavabhuti's deep grounding in philosophy is obvious and, therefore, it would not be surprising if he had written shastric works. Unfortunately, all that has

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1. 'न हि पुरा आप्त एव सन् नाटकनाटिकादिप्रबन्धविरचनमात्रेण अनाप्तो भवति भवभूतिः।' *Tattvapradipika* (Nirnayasagar ed., p. 265)
2. See Kunhan Raja : Intr. to *Shlokavartikavyakhya*, *op. cit.* pp xxiii-xxiv; also, *Survey of Sanskrit Literature*.

survived from Bhavabhuti's pen is his three dramas : *Mahavira-charita, Malatimadhava* and *Uttararamacharita.*

Scholars are not in agreement about the chronological order of the composition of the three plays. M. R. Kale looks upon *Malatimadhava* as the poet's first youthful effort. It is in line with the established tradition of love plays; and while it has some merits, there are obvious defects in it, On the other hand, the Rama plays imply a contiguity[3]. Sharadaranjan Ray, who follows Anundoram Borooah, holds the exact opposite view that *Malati-madhava* is purer in style and more attractive and is, therefore, the last work of Bhavabhuti. *Mahaviracharita* was followed by *Uttararamacharita*, though it was staged later. Ray thinks that the allusions to the poet's maturity and to mastery of speech in the Rama plays refer really to Valmiki[4].

Literary criticism often tends to be subjective. Arguments can be used to reach opposite conclusions. Textual references can have alternative interpretations. Thus, the prologue of *Uttara-ramacharita* which runs into the opening scene, which Ray regards as a sign of earlier writing, may be a peculiarity only; a somewhat similar prologue is found in *Malatimadhava.* The two Rama plays need not have been written one after another although they deal with the earlier and later life of the same hero. The personal attitude reflected in the prologue of the three plays may equally suggest that hostile reception of *Mahaviracharita* angered the poet, and he had a fling at the critics in his *Malati-madhava.* The poet's words in *Uttararamacharita* may not reflect bitterness, but a mature understanding of the fickle nature of public applause[5].

A literary approach would tell a different tale. (i) In the *Maha-viracharita* and *Malatimadhava,* the poet gives a long biogra-phical account; in *Uttararamacharita* it is very short. (*ii*) *Mahaviracharita* and *Malatimadhava* have complex plots and many important characters; the *Uttararamacharita* centers on the hero and the heroine only, and the characterization definitely

3. See Kale, *Uttararamacharita,* ed. Introduction.
4. See Ray, *Uttaracharita,* ed., Introduction, pp. xi-xviii.
5. For details of the controversy, see my *Uttararamacharita,* Intr. pp. 17-24.

improves. (*iii*) In *Malatimadhava* young love is treated; in *Uttararamacharita* it is the mature love of an elderly couple that receives superb treatment. (*iv*) *Workmanship* in plot-building and emotional intensity, not romantic passion merely, are on a higher level as one proceeds from *Mahaviracharita*, through *Malatimadhava*, to *Uttararamacharita*. And this seems reasonably to be the chronological order of the plays[6].

Literary legends, recorded in the *Bhojaprabandha*, connect Bhavabhuti with Kalidasa, Dandin and Vararuchi, and with the court of King Bhoja. Such stories have no historical value. They may reflect the admiration in which these poets were held by tradition, and they occasionally record the poet's particular abilities. The only literary association of which we could be certain is that between Bhavabhuti and the Prakrit poet Vakpatiraja, both patronised by Yashovarman of Kanoj[7].

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6. See my *Uttararamacharita*, Intr., pp. 24-25. See also Karmarkar, *Bhavabhuti*, pp. 81-85: Todar Mall, *Mahaviracharita*, Intr. p. xxxi; Belwalkar, *The Later History of Rama*, Harvard Oriental Series, Vol. 21, Intr.

7. For details see my URC. Introduction, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-27.

CHAPTER THREE

BHAVABHUTI'S DATE AND TIMES

(1)

THE period of Bhavabhuti's literary career can be fixed as nearly accurately as possible by his association with king Yashovarman and the Prakrit poet Vakpatiraja.

I. (*i*) Kalhana mentions in his *Rajatarangini* that Vakpatiraja, Bhavabhuti and other poets were patronised by Yashovarman, and records the fact of the king's defeat by Muktapida Lalitaditya. Kalhana places Lalitaditya between 693 and 730 A. D. But Chinese chronology records that a predecessor of Lalitaditya, namely Chandrapida, had sent an ambassador to the Chinese Emperor and received from him a title in A.D. 713. Lalitaditya himself had commissioned an embassy to China after A. D. 736. This record necessitates a correction of about 31 years in Kalhana's dates. The period of Lalitaditya then comes to be between A. D. 724 and 761 (or 731-767); Yashovarman's defeat by Lalitaditya may therefore be placed round A. D. 733.

(*ii*) The Chinese chronology also mentions that a king of Central India, I-cha-fon-mo had sent an ambassador to China in A. D. 731. This king is Yashovarman according to Dr Mirashi. Yashovarman is, as seen above, a contemporary of Lalitaditya and may have started his reign about A. D. 725.

(*iii*) A Jain writer, Rajashekhara Suri (about 1348 A. D.), states that the son of Yashovarman, Amaraja, accepted Jain faith in A. D. 750. Amaraja succeeded to the throne in A. D. 754. Yashovarman therefore must have died between A. D. 750 and 754; and must have ruled between A. D. 725 and 752.

(*iv*) Vakpatiraja composed his *Gaudavaho* in honour of his patron Yashovarman, whose conquest of the Gauda king is described in this Prakrit epic. A solar eclipse is mentioned in this poem (*Gaudavaho*, verse 829). Jacobi has calculated it to have occurred on the 14th August 733 A. D. It is, therefore, reasonable to suppose that this poem was completed by 735 A. D.

This evidence indicates Bhavabhuti's time to be the end of the 7th and the first few decades of the 8th century A. D. It can be further narrowed down to 700-730 A. D. by the fact that Vakpatiraja not only praises Bhavabhuti but also admits with pride Bhavabhuti's influence on his own poetic composition.

II. The period calculated by historical evidence is corroborated by other literary evidence.

(*i*) The influence of Kalidasa is very apparent on Bhavabhuti's writing. References to the love marriage between Dushyanta-Shakuntala and Pururavas-Urvashi, the similar role of Pandita Kaushiki and Kamandaki, suggestive allusions to Meghaduta in Madhava's speeches, and the similarity between the two scenes where Dushyanta and Rama recognise by tell-tale signs their own sons, clearly indicate how Bhavabhuti was influenced by Kalidasa's plays and poems. It is natural that he must come after Kalidasa.

(*ii*) Bana (A. D. 606-647) or Dandin (*Avantisundari-katha*, A. D. 675-700) do not mention Bhavabhuti. It is a negative but a significant fact. Obviously the earlier limit of Bhavabhuti's period is 700 A. D.

(*iii*) A number of literary writers and rhetoricians refer to and quote from Bhavabhuti : Kshemendra (11th Cent. A. D.), Mammata (11th Cent. A. D.), Mahimabhatta (early part of the 11th Cent. A. D.), Somadeva (10th Cent. A. D.), Dhananjaya (10th Cent. A. D.), Soddhala, the author of *Udayanasundari-katha* (before 1050 A. D.), Kuntaka (about 1000 A. D.), Abhinavagupta (980-1020 A. D.), and the dramatist Rajashekhara

(early part of 10th Cent. A. D.) who claims to be a re-incarnation of Bhavabhuti. Quotations from Bhavabhuti occur in Anthologies compiled from 11th century A. D. onwards. Besides Vakpatiraja, Vamana (8th Cent. A. D.) is the earliest theorist who uses two verses of Bhavabhuti by way of illustrations.

Bhavabhuti's literary activity can, therefore, be safely put between 700 and 730 A. D.

(2)

From the personal information about the poet we learn that he was a native of Padmapura in Vidarbha, moved to Padmavati in pursuit of his literary career, and was finally patronised by king Yashvarman of Kanoj. In his life Bhavabhuti appears to have been connected with Vidarbha and northern India.

In this period (7th and 8th Cent. A. D.) Kashmir was ruled over by Lalitaditya, and Kanoj was the capital of the equally powerful king Yashovarman who came on the throne by about 725 A. D. Kalhana, the chronicler of Kashmir, records in his *Rajatarangini* that Lalitaditya inflicted defeat on Yashovarman (round about 740 A. D.). But both these kings are credited with political conquests and are held as patrons of religion, literature and arts. The political picture of Vidarbha, at this time, was a little different. Vidarbha was under the sway of Nannaraja, of Rashtrakuta family. These rulers were vassals of Kalachuri kings of Mahishmati, and later of Pulakeshin II of the Chalukya kings of Badami, when Pulakeshin crushed the Kalachuris and extended his political sway over three Maharashtras, that is to say, over Vidarbha, northern Maharashtra and Kuntala, the southern Maharashtra. Thus, after the Vakatakas, the Rashtrakutas who ruled Vidarbha were vassals only. Padmavati (Padampavaya, to the north-west of Gwalior) was under the rule of Naga kings of the Bharashiva family from the 3rd or 4th Cent. A. D. The later history of Padmavati is not known. But Bhavabhuti's description in the *Malatimadhava* suggests that this city may have been in a prosperous condition upto the 8th Cent. A. D. Absence of sovereign rule in Vidarbha at this time indicates why Bhavabhuti had to leave his native place, try to seek his fortune at

Padmavati, and finally wend his way to the north to win royal patronage at Kanoj.

The copper plate grants discovered in Vidarbha suggest that Nannaraja who ruled over Vidarbha in the 7th Cent. A. D. was inclined towards Brahmanical religion. But Northern India, during the reign of Yashovarman, witnessed the spread and persuasion of many religious sects, including Bauddha and Jain religions. Vakpatiraja describes in his *Gaudavaho* the Hindu deities. The visit of Yashovarman to the goddess Vindhyavasini during his military campaign is rather elaborately described. The description includes the worship of the goddess by offerings of human skulls, drinking of blood by goblins, and sale of human flesh as a means of divine propitiation. The details are peculiar to the Kapalika sect. The scene of Kapalika worship in the *Malatimadhava* reflects prevalence of this sect during this period. Buddhist and Jaina religions also had their patrons and adherents. A son of the minister of Yashovarman is known to have given grants to the temples and monks of Nalanda Vidyapith; Yashovarman's own son and successor, Amaraja, embraced Jain religion; and remains of Buddhist stupas have been discovered at Padmavati. Hindu and Buddhist religions flourished in Kashmir also side by side. The Kashmir kings were Hindu; and Lalitaditya is known to have helped the building of many Hindu temples, one of which was the Martanda temple of Sun erected on a hill near Shrinagara; its remains are visible even at present. Lalitaditya was a generous sovereign and performed many an act of religious charity and public philanthropy. The atmosphere of religious tolerance and generosity among different religious faiths that we find in Bhavabhuti's plays, and the prosperity of Brahmanical religion, may be a reflection of actual conditions prevailing in the region in this particular age[1].

It also appears that conditions were generally favourable and encouraging for the growth and spread of literature. King Yashovarman himself was partial to poetic and dramatic writing. Some

1. For details of political history, see MM. Dr. Mirashi : *Vakataka Kings* and *their Times*, *Kalachuri Kings and their Times* (both, Marathi); also, his *Bhavabhuti*, *op. cit.*

of his miniature verses appear in Sanskrit Anthologies. He is also credited with the composition of a play, *Ramabhyudaya*, now lost. His court poet Vakpatiraja had composed an eulogistic poem in honour of his patron, which had won him royal favour and the title of Kaviraja. This poem, *Gaudavaho*, is remarkable in two respects : it is written in Prakrit; and, apart from the grace of its rhetorical embellishment and easy flow of language, it presents very attractive pictures of village life. Vakpatiraja is supposed to have composed another Prakrit poem, *Madhumathanavijaya*, and some stray verses which, at a later stage, seem to have been incorporated in the famous Prakrit Anthology, *Gatha-Saptashati*. There must have been other literary works produced during this period of time, although they are now lost to us.

It is true that Bhavabhuti earned the patronage of Yashovarman of Kanoj at a later stage in his life. But Kalhana tells us that he was an honoured poet of Yashovarman's court; and the handsome tribute that Vakpatiraja has paid to this senior contemporary of his establishes Bhavabhuti's poetic ability and renown. Even before Bhavabhuti secured royal recognition, his plays were produced at the festival of Kalapriyanatha by a troupe of actors with whom Bhavabhuti was personally acquainted. This fact, recorded in the prologues of Bhavabhuti's plays, suggests that Bhavabhuti had, at least, a popular audience.

What then must have led Bhavabhuti to have a fling at his critics, as he does in the prologue of his *Malatimadhava*? And who were these people who spread bad word about him[2]? There is a feeling of suppressed bitterness in this utterance and of philosophic resignation in the sutradhara's pronouncement on public scandal in the prologue of the *Uttararamacharita*[3]. Since the general conditions at this time do not appear to be unfavourable to literary activity, Bhavabhuti's observations must spring from a personal experience which is now obscure to us.

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2. The complete stanza is MM I.6 :
ये नाम केचिदिह नः प्रथयन्त्यवज्ञां जानन्ति ते किमपि तान् प्रति नैष यत्नः ।
उत्पत्स्यतेऽस्ति मम कोऽपि समानधर्मा कालो ह्ययं निरवधिर्विपुला च पृथ्वी ॥

3. See URC. 1.5 :
सर्वथा व्यवहर्तव्यं कुतो ह्यवचनीयता । यथा स्त्रीणां तथा वाचां साधुत्वे दुर्जनो जनः ॥

The usual explanation given by literary critics is that Bhavabhuti's first play, the *Mahaviracharita*, failed as a drama. The sensitive poet took the failure rather hard. But confident of his own learning and poetic ability he replied to his critics with feeling in the prologue of his second play. This is not unlikely. However, the prologue generally refers to the very play to which it is attached. *Malatimadhava* is comparatively a good play and the poet writes with a certain awareness of literary requirements that make a delightful drama. There does not seem to be any point, therefore, in hitting at the critics.

Recently another critic has suggested that Bhavabhuti's fling is at Banabhatta's son and at the literary circle that admired Bana's prose romances and his heavy ornate style and resented any imitation. The *Malatimadhava* shows some close affinity to Bana's *Kadambari* in the treatment of its erotic theme and in the style of its composition. Bana was a great literary force in the century preceding Bhavabhuti's times. The patronage of Emperor Harsha had given prestige to Bana's renown. So, the emulation of Bana was resented by some literary people and Bhavabhuti is replying to them[4].

The connection between Bana and Bhavabhuti is rather remote separated as they are by a century. It is too much to assume that Bhavabhuti's plays immediately reached the literary circle that admired Bana's writing. On the contrary it appears that Bhavabhuti's early audience consisted of festival crowds. When he got an elite audience and found a kindred soul in Vakpatiraja, his poetic ability was duly recognised. Traditional comment on Bhavabhuti's writing is very favourable. Tradition holds Bhavabhuti only second to Kalidasa. It is more reasonable, therefore to seek the cause of Bhavabhuti's impassioned outburst in personal circumstances.

To my mind the question is not of Bhavabhuti's first play but of the character of his entire dramatic writing. Bhasa, Kalidasa, Shudraka, Harsha—the dramatists that preceded Bhavabhuti—had

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4. G. C. Jhala ; "*Bhavabhuti and His Contemporary Detractors*", Journal of the Oriental Institute, Baroda, Vol. XIV, Nos. 3-4; March-June 1965; pp. 448-463.

forged certain literary trends. They wrote plays using simple diction in their dialogues, resembling as far as possible the spoken character of the Sanskrit language. They chose varied themes and depicted a variety of emotions, but the emotion of love received its due measure. And though they used serious events, the drama yet continued to be a delightful entertainment satisfying a variety of popular taste. It appears that Bhavabhuti was a serious-minded intellectual by temperament and by training. The ornamental prose style used by Subandhu, Bana and Dandin in their stories of love and adventure must have had an intellectual fascination for him, and he used it for dialogue-writing in dramas. He used themes of love but he could not suppress the serious tone and the philosophising. Gay and light atmosphere is removed from Bhavabhuti's dramas. An intellectual air and ornate heavy diction that Bhavabhuti brought to his playwriting was a new trend; and it was bound to take time to be appreciated.

It is tempting to believe that the sensitive poet felt this lack of response and became rather bitter during the early part of his dramatic career. Yet I feel that the disparagement about which Bhavabhuti complains comes from still a different quarter.

The personal and family history of Bhavabhuti shows that he belonged to a learned, priestly family of Brahmins and was fully trained in Shastric learning. Probably his family, his relations and friends in his native place expected him to take up priestly and Shastric career. Instead, Bhavabhuti gave up these Vedic, ritualistic and Shastric pursuits, knowing that they had no value for a literary career[5]. He cultivated friendship with actors and composed plays for theatrical performance. This break from respectable family traditions could never have been tolerated by the orthodox society. Bhavabhuti's own relatives and family friends must have criticised his literary pursuits in severe terms, especially his association with actors who were regarded then as a low class in society. It is possible that the memory of this

5. See *Malatimadhava*, 1.7 :

यद्वेदाध्ययनं तथोपनिषदां सांख्यस्य योगस्य च
ज्ञानं तत्कथनेन किं, न हि ततः कश्चिद्गुणो नाटके ।

bitter opposition from his own people never left Bhavabhuti even when he came to write his greatest work, the *Uttararamacharita.* I suggest this as a possible explanation for the sensitive reaction of Bhavabhuti. We may then understand why Bhavabhuti had to leave his native place and wander over to Padmavati, Kalpi and then to Kanoj, where he presumably settled down under the patronage of King Yashovarman.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PLAYS OF BHAVABHUTI

1. MAHAVIRACHARITA

(I)

MAHAVIRA or the the great hero is Rama. The play is based on the Ramayana of Valmiki and deals with the early life of Rama, from his childhood upto the coronation. The extra-ordinary charm of Valmiki's inspired poetry and Bhavabhuti's personal devotion to Rama led Bhavabhuti to compose this first play[1]. It appears from the evidence of the manuscripts and the Sanskrit commentators that Bhavabhuti wrote upto act V, verse 46. The extant play has seven acts. The rest of the material was written up by others : the Northern version by the poet Vinayaka Bhatta, and the Southern version by Subrahmanya. There is a third version also by an anonymous writer. Todar Mall and Ratnam Aiyer (Nirnayasagar edition) believe that the Northern version is generally the more acceptable text among the different versions; and Todar Mall[2] is inclined to take it as Bhavabhuti's own writing. If the text is really incomplete, it is a literary puzzle that has not been solved.

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1. Cf. MVC. prologue, I, 7
2. Cf. The *Mahaviracharita*, ed., Introduction.

Bhavabhuti presents the epic story in this play keeping the essential outline in tact but introducing significant variations to suit his dramatic purpose. The play opens in the hermitage of Vishvamitra. Rama and Lakshmana are already present here to guard the sacrifices against demons. Janaka's brother Kushadhvaja arrives with Sita and Urmila at the instance of Vishvamitra. The bow of Shiva is brought, which Rama strings and breaks. The weddings are then arranged and Janaka and Dasharatha are sent for. All this happens before Sarvamaya, Ravana's priest, who had brought his master's proposal to marry Sita. Sarvamaya regards the happenings as a humiliation and insult to Ravana.

In vengeance, Ravana's minister Malyavat provokes Parashurama to destroy Rama. The next two acts are taken up with this altercation in which all the people are involved. The sages try to remain calm; but Shatananda, Janaka's priest, is enraged by the personal insult given to him by Parashurama; Janaka wants to spare Rama and meet Parashurama's challenge personally; Rama finally announces his decision to fight with Parashurama.

Rama humbles the pride of Parashurama. So, Malyavat plans another strategy. Shurpanakha is instructed to enter the body of Manthara, and under her influence Kaikeyi sends a letter demanding the fulfilment of the two boons given her by Dasharatha. The preparations for the coronation, which was to take place in Mithila, are set aside. Rama is willing and eager to go to Dandaka and plans his itinerary.

Acts five to seven cover the story from Rama's exile, the abduction of Sita, killing of thousands of demons and of Valin, all provoked by Malyavat, till the final battle with Ravana and the triumphant return of Rama to Ayodhya in the *Pushpaka vimana* presented to him by the presiding deity of Kubera's Alaka.

(II)

Bhavabhuti attempts in this play to present almost the whole *charita* of Rama, from his early marriage to his victory over Ravana and his final consecration on the throne of Ayodhya. This is not a theme that can be encompassed within the bounds of dramatic form and the natural limitations of a theatre-stage. An obvious way would have been to select only a few outstand-

ing events in the life of the Maha-vira, present them in dramatic acts, and leave the rest to the imagination of the audience, supplying only the necessary links between events. To attempt a near-full career of a hero is a literary risk. Partaking of the character of a *prabandha* of narrative composition and of dramatic dialogue, the writing may be unfair to both the literary forms and be unsatisfactory on either counts.

The dramatist has been required to cram a number of incidents within the space of a dramatic act. For example, rejuvenation of Ahalya, killing of Tataka, gift of Jrimbhaka missiles, breaking of Shiva's bow, fixing of the marriage of the four brothers, in act I; the arrangements for Rama's coronation, Kaikeyi's demands, the exile of Rama, his planning of the sojourn in Dandaka, in act IV; and all the events from the abduction of Sita to the triumphant return of Rama to Ayodhya, in the following acts. Most of these events are hinted at or narrated. Some, like the Ahalya episode, intervention of Dasharatha in the quarrel between Parashurama and Rama, Kaikeyi's demands, the abduction of Sita, Mandodari's entreaty to Ravana and so on, are strangely enough, reported 'from behind the curtain'. The play aims at presenting *vira rasa*, the heroic emotion. But Rama's destruction of thousands of demons, his fight with Valin, and the crowning battle with Ravana are events which have to be merely reported. The inevitable limitations and conventions of stage representation would never permit the actual showing of a fight or a war.

Bhavabhuti deserves, in a way, the reader's sympathy for attempting a nearly impossible task, unless he is to be criticised for a misguided literary effort. But he must be given credit for perceiving the inherent difficulties in his composition and for his planned effort to introduce a thread of unity to connect the many isolated events in his story. This effort is done on three levels: (i) Disregarding the Ramayana, the authentic source of his story, Bhavabhuti makes a number of incidents happen at one central place in order to achieve unity of place for the dramatic action of an act. The episodes connected, for example, with Ahalya, Tataka, gift of Jrimbhaka missiles, Shiva's bow, marriage proposals, happen all in the hermitage of Vishvamitra. The scene of action for the second, third and fourth acts is Mithila, the

royal palace and harem. The altercation between Parashurama and Rama and others takes place here. Bhavabhuti manages, albeit against Ramayana, to locate the preparations for Rama's coronation, the demands of Kaikeyi, the acceptance of Rama's sandals by Bharata and the departure of Rama to Dandaka, all in Mithila. For this purpose, Bhavabhuti brings the required characters to the place of action somehow. Manthara, for example, is brought to Mithila to inquire after Dasharatha; and she has a letter from Kaikeyi which contains her demands. In the same way, Shabari acts like the central link for the events of the fifth act. She gives Rama a letter from Bibhishana and directs the brothers to Valin's place. All this may appear to be an open deviation from Ramayana. The liberty which a dramatist is permitted to take with his sources may also appear to be overstretched. Yet the dramatist's intention to provide a unified location for his story development cannot be mistaken. (ii) More pertinent, and probably more successful, is Bhavabhuti's effort at unity of action. The numerous incidents have no connection with each other in the original epic except that they happen in the life of the hero, Rama. Bhavabhuti shows in his play that Ravana had sent his priest Sarvamaya to convey his offer to marry Sita. This offer is rejected by Kushadhvaja. At this moment the incident of Shiva's bow is reported from behind the scene (I. 53-54). Rama strings it and breaks it, thus fulfilling the stipulation of Janaka. All this happens in the presence of Sarvamaya. Bhavabhuti suggests that the seed of all actions that Ravana did in order to avenge this insult and humiliation sprang from these events. Bhavabhuti introduces another powerful motive to unify the dramatic action. The minister of Ravana Malyavat appears on the scene from the second act. His role is a natural sequel to the report that Sarvamaya must have made to Ravana. Malyavat engineers various schemes to destroy Rama and obtain Sita for Ravana. In Bhavabhuti's showing, the fight between Parashurama and Rama is a result of the provocation that Malyavat provided. Tataka, Shurpanakha and the host of demons who come in the way of Rama and Lakshmana are instigated to do so by Malyavat. Shurpanakha is asked to take possession of Manthara's body and work through her on Kaikeyi's mind; so that Kaikeyi's

demands which send Rama to Dandaka result from Malyavat's scheme. The abduction of Sita, harassment of Shabari by Danu-Kabandha, the opposition of Valin to Rama, are similarly manoeuvred by Malyavat. This is, indeed, a comprehensive effort to show that almost the whole Ramayana was a consequence of Ravana's frustration and the diplomatic schemes (*bheda-niti*) conceived by his minister. (iii) The third level on which Bhavabhuti tries to give a unified impression by his story is the colour of *vira rasa* which dominates the total dramatic action. Bhavabhuti confesses that he was moved by this sentiment, and its complementary feelings, when he read the original grand epic[3]. And in dramatising the Ramakatha he intended to capture these emotions. Heroic sentiment is present evidently in the actions of Rama, presented or narrated. It is seen in the encounter between Rama and Valin. It is subtly felt in the utterances of Vasishtha, Vishvamitra, Janaka and Dasharatha. The marvellous (*adbhuta*) is a necessary accompaniment of the heroic; and it is felt in the description of the Jrimbhaka missiles and in that of the fight between Rama and Ravana. Many actions, for example, Rama's breaking the bow of Shiva, the rejuvenation of Ahalya, killing of thousands of demons, his arrow penetrating seven Tala trees, mountain and surface of the earth, Rama's tossing a huge bone pile with his foot in the vicinity of Pampa[4], show an admixture of the heroic and the marvellous. The furious sentiment (*raudra*) is complementary to the heroic; and the utterances of Parashurama particularly and of Shatananda (act III, verses 20, 21) show it. In a mythical account, with the demons present, the loathsome sentiment (*bibhatsa*) is possible; the descriptions of Tataka and Kabandha have this colour. There is also a touch of love and of the pathos accompanying love-in-separation. But Bhavabhuti keeps these emotions in place. The shades and subsidiary feelings serve to heighten the heroic. Harmony of emotional impact is thereby mostly ensured.

3. See MVC. prologue: I.2,3,6.
4. MVC. V. 38, 39. This is in accordance with the *Ramayana* version, IV. 11.50. But MVC VII.16[9] contradicts this, where Bibhishana attributes the feat to Lakshmana. *Anargharaghava*, V. 25 and *Kamba Ramayana* 4. 5 do the same. See Fr. Bulke : *Ramakatha : Utpatti aur Vikas*, (Prayag University, 1962), p. 477.

Some innovations of the dramatist are interesting. For instance,. Bhavabhuti brings Rama and Sita together in Vishvamitra's hermitage. This creates feelings of mutual attraction and admiration. Sita is able to see the heroism of Rama and is present by his side during the altercation with Parashurama. The suggestion is that their marriage was not exactly a matter of arrangement effected by the elders; it had a basis of mutual attraction and love. It is shown that Kaikeyi was an indirect victim of Malyavat's machinations; the suggestion for Rama's coronation comes from Bharata and his maternal uncle Yudhajit; with these touches Bhavabhuti softens the blame which has been generally attributed to Kaikeyi.

However, many other innovations are questionable and inartistic. Bhavabhuti brings several characters into Mithila and sends away others, only because he has designed Mithila as the scene of his action. But how could the deliberations to install Rama on the throne be conducted in Mithila and in the absence of Dasharatha's family priest Vasishtha? Janaka is made to explain to Dasharatha that the sage Vamadeva is present, and Vasishtha and Vishvamitra, though absent, would approve of a good action. This is neither satisfactory nor convincing. The introduction of Manthara and Kaikeyi's letter seem only to serve the convenience of the dramatist. Bhavabhuti shows further that Rama proceeded to Dandaka from Mithila and the Brahmins of Ayodhya were present with their domestic ritual fires to bid good-bye to him. This is virtually a blunder. Even allowing for quick movement in dramatic action, how could the news of Rama's exile travel so fast to Ayodhya and the Brahmins catch the moment of his departure with complete preparation?

In placing the main spring of action in the hands of Malyavat, Bhavabhuti gained an obvious unity for his story. But he failed to portray in Malyavat a true politician and diplomat. Malyavat has the habit of discussing and outlining his schemes openly. This robs them of any element of surprise or suspense, which is so essential for literary and dramatic treatment. The characterization of Parashurama is better done. His confidence in his powers, his devotion to Shiva, his boast, arrogance and insolence are neatly shown. The change that comes over him after Rama humbles

his pride is equally convincing. But even this picture of Parashurama is damaged on account of the unbecoming and abusive language put in his mouth.

The play thus suffers by its uneven construction. Too much narration, reporting by characters from behind the curtain or in interludes, lower its dramatic quality. However, even in this first play, Bhavabhuti's mastery of the language, his ability for weird and imaginative descriptions, and his skill in capturing in words subtle moods or emotions, are unmistakably seen.

2. MALATIMADHAVA

(I)

Devarata, minister to the Vidarbha king, and Bhurivasu, minister of the king of Padmavati, were schoolmates. They were so attached to each other that they had vowed, in their young days, that if they had a son and a daughter they would get them married. It so happened that Devarata's son Madhava came to Padmavati with his companion Makaranda to study philosophy. And during his evening strolls through the city he happened to be noticed by Malati, the daughter of Bhurivasu. Youth and comely appearance strengthened mutual attraction. A meeting in the city park at the festival of Kamadeva, and exchange of gifts of a Bakula garland from Madhava and of his portrait from Malati, left no doubt that both were earnestly in love with each other.

Kamandaki who was now living in Padmavati as a Buddhist nun had studied with Devarata and Bhurivasu and was fully aware of their intentions. Determined to help, she had encouraged Malati, through her nurse's daughter and companion Lavangika, in her love for Madhava. Kamandaki's pupil Buddharakshita had contacted Madayantika, Malati's friend from childhood, for Makaranda. Unfortunately, Nandana, the king's close companion and brother of Madayantika, coveted Malati. Bhurivasu had meekly to accept the king's wishes. Kamandaki personally talked to Malati, impressed on her mind the supreme importance of love as the basis of marriage, and persuaded her to act boldly like Shakuntala, Urvashi and Vasavadatta, the heroines of old tales. But traditions of noble lineage and respect and devotion to parents outweighed the love that Malati felt for Madhava.

amandaki arranged for the two pairs of lovers to meet in a Shiva temple. But the meeting is somehow spoiled by a tiger attacking Madayantika. Makaranda rushes for her rescue, slays the tiger but is wounded and faints. Madhava sees the condition of his companion and is unnerved.

The incident brought Makaranda and Madayantika closer together in love. They also came to know for the first time now that Malati was to be married to Nandana. Madayantika was happy because Nandana was her brother. Madhava, on the contrary, was terribly unhappy inspite of the assurance of personal help given by Kamandaki.

Madhava had left with Makaranda to have a bath at the confluence of the rivers Sindhu and Para. Actually he had planned to enter the cemetery grounds beyond the rivers and offer human flesh to goblins in order to secure some miraculous power or help from them.

Now, the Kapalika Aghoraghanta had instructed his pupil Kapalakundala to find a young maiden whom he could offer in a sacrifice and complete thereby his attainment of special tantric powers. After the tiger episode Malati had repaired home and was asleep at night on the terrace. She was carried away from there by Kapalakundala and brought to her guru. By a lucky coincidence Madhava arrived at a crucial moment to save Malati's life. The news of Malati's disappearance had also brought a search-party of soldiers sent by her father and led by Kamandaki, and the temple of Karala on the cemetery grounds was laid under seige. In the personal fight Madhava killed Aghoraghanta.

Kamandaki had an ingenious scheme to thwart Malati's marriage to Nandana. She had persuaded the king and Malati's parents that the bridal procession should start from the temple of the local Deity worshipped by all citizens.

Malati would put on the special bridal dress presented by the king in the temple. Kamandaki had arranged that Madhava and Makaranda would previously hide themselves in the inner shrine. When Malati entered the temple with only her companion Lavangika, she would escape by the backdoor with Madhava through a thicket of trees towards a monastery and a garden at the back of it, where they would be married. Makaranda would then wear

Malati's bridal dress and go in the procession to be married to Nandana.

Makaranda played his part to perfection. After the ceremony he entered the bed-chamber of Nandana, maintained his disguise, and acted the part of a shy bride. Nandana's efforts to meet his 'wife' failed. He left in anger and frustration swearing that he would never see his bride's face. Madayantika came to the bed-chamber to chide 'Malati' and advise her about conjugal behaviour. Makaranda, in Malati's disguise, pretended to be asleep. Lavangika and Buddharakshita, who were present in the bed-chamber as the bride's companions, explained to Madayantika that Nandana's impatient and rough behaviour had shocked the newly married girl. They then turned the conversation to Madayantika's own love for Makaranda. In the privacy of the bed-chamber Madayantika was frank. The result was that Makaranda threw away his disguise and eloped with Madayantika after midnight.

The news of the deception and flight of the young lovers leaked and immediately armed guards were despatched in pursuit of them. Makaranda managed to send the women to safety at the temporary residence of Madhava behind the monastery where Madhava and Malati were waiting to know if Buddharakshita had succeeded in uniting Makaranda and Madayantika. Now Buddharakshita, Lavangika and Madayantika appear on the scene with Kalahamsaka, disclosing the news of Makaranda's encounter with the city guards. Madhava is confident of his friend's heroic ability but rushes to help him with Kalahamaska. Malati sends Buddharakshita and Avalokita to Kamandaki to appraise her of the development, and Lavangika to Madhava to request him to be careful in fighting.

Malati is thus left alone. Kapalakundala, who was biding her time and opportunity to avenge her preceptor's death, seizes the moment and abducts Malati.

Madhava and Makaranda had given a brave fight to the guards and to the army that was pouring from all sides. The king himself was pleased with the young heroes and congratulated the parents for getting such sons-in-law. But the jubilation over heroic performance was short-lived. The mysterious disappearance of Malati came as a sudden shock to the parents, the king and

the entire populace of Padmavati and plunged them in misery and sorrow. Madhava lost his balance of mind and wandered over hills and dales searching for Malati. Makaranda seeing no hope for his friend thought of jumping to death from a precipice. Malati's father decided to end his life. The king and Kamandaki lamented and wept helplessly. Kamandaki was ready to commit suicide. In this utter disaster Kamandaki's one-time pupil Saudamini, who had acquired powers of yoga, had spotted Kapalakundala passing along the sky with Malati. She rescued Malati and saved Madhava's and Makaranda's life.

Saudamini's timely arrival in Padmavati, with the young people safe, changed the picture. The miserable city became a city of rejoicing. Malati's marriage to Madhava was approved by the king. Makaranda was married to Madayantika. In the happiness of the young the elders found their own happiness.

(II)

In the language of Sanskrit Dramaturgy the *Malatimadhava* is a *Prakarana*. The plot of a *prakarana* type of drama is derived from the life of the people or is imaginatively conceived by the playwright, and revolves round the sentiment of love. It uses a big canvas and the play may have five to ten acts. The heroine may be maiden of a noble family, like Malati in this play, or a courtesan, like Vasantasena in Shudraka's *Mrichchhakatika*; in the former case the *prakarana* is called 'pure' and in the latter case, 'mixed'[5]. The extent of treatment, with a background of social life and realism, and the theme of love naturally afford good scope for a writer's imaginative and poetic abilities.

For the story of the play Bhavabhuti may have been inspired by some tales in the *Brihatkatha* of Gunadhya. The original, written in Paishachi dialect, probably before the beginning of the Christian era, is now lost. But its Sanskrit versions, the *Brihatkathamanjari* of Kshemendra and *Kathasaritsagara* of Somadeva, of the 11th Cent. A.D., are available for comparison. The story of the Brahmin Yashaskara's son and of Madiravati, the sister of a Kshatriya youth Vijayasena, shows some striking

5. See Bharata : *Natyashastra*, XVIII. 44-53.

parallel to the story of this play. The stay of Yashaskara's son Sadbhava in the house of a preceptor for education in the city Vishala; the love of Sadbhava and Madiravati; Madiravati's present of a *malati* garland to her young lover and his fondness for wearing it; Madiravati's proposed marriage to some Kshatriya lad; her visit to the temple of Kamadeva on the eve of the marriage ceremony and her attempt to end her life; Sadbhava, concealed behind the idol, coming forward and rescuing her; the escape of the young lovers by the backdoor of the temple; Sadbhava's friend disguising himself in the bride's costume and returning to Madiravati's house; his unexpected meeting there with a young girl whom he had saved formerly from the attack of an elephant; their mutual love and elopement[6]: details such as these have a strong resemblance to the incidents in the story of Malati-Madhava and Madayantika-Makaranda. The story of another Brahmin youth, named Vidushaka, tells of his attempt to win supernatural powers by visiting the cremation grounds at mid-night; he sees there a pravrajaka (Kapalika) sacrificing to goddess Katyayani a princess, the daughter of king Adityasena; he kills the Kapalika with his sword; with the blessings of the goddess he reaches the royal harem safely with the princess; and the king pleased with his valour bestows his daughter on him[7].

The motifs of a young maiden's sacrifice, sale of living human flesh to propitiate and win over goblins, are found in these stories[8]. The scene of the cremation grounds and Aghoraghanta's dreadful ritual in the fifth act of the play may have their prototype in these Brihatkatha tales. In fact, the idea of a young boy disguising himself in feminine garb and duping others for a purpose is present in Vishakhadatta's play *Devi-chandragupta* which has been retrieved in fragments[9]. The young hero concealing himself and rushing forward to save the heroine from attempted suicide

6. Cf. *Kathasaritsagara*, XIII. 1.17-214.
7. *Ibid.* III. 4.145 ff. Also, *Brihatkathamanjari*, III 1.194-230.
8. Cf. *Kathasaritsagara*, V.2.182-3; *Brihatkathamanjari*, XVIII. 2.53-54.
9. For an account of this play see Dr Raghavan : *The Social Play in Sanskrit*. The Indian Institute of Culture, Bangalore, Transaction No. 11 (1952); pp. 7-11; also, *The Journal of the Benaras Hindu University*, Vol. II (1937-38), pp. 23-54, 307.

is found in Bhasa's Avimaraka and in Harsha's *Ratnavali*. The picture of Madhava losing his mental balance in the nineth act has its prototype in *Ramayana*, and in Kalidasa's *Vikramorvashiya* in the madness of Pururavas. And the quiet Parivrajika in Kalidasa's *Malavikagnimitra* is the forerunner of Bhavabhuti's very active Kamandaki.

This is not to suggest that Bhavabhuti lacks inventive ability. In fact, the motif of an intoxicated elephant running wild and causing all-round panic, which is found in the Brihatkatha tale and many other plays like *Shakuntala* or *Mrichchhakatika*, has been changed by Bhavabhuti to that of an attack by a tiger. The ability of a writer is not to be judged by pure inventive skill, which is almost rare. His skill lies in handling the sources and in using different elements to create a new work of art.

Malatimadhava is a story of love. Bhavabhuti has woven the dramatic pattern with three distinct strands. The main theme is the love of Malati and Madhava and its fulfilment. This should have presented no difficulty as it was desired and planned by their parents. The dramatist introduces an element of conflict to heighten the interest in this love. There are two obstacles in its smooth development. Malati's proposed marriage to the King's favourite companion Nandana is one; and it is an extraneous obstacle. The internal obstacle is Malati's own character and disposition. She is straight-forward and righteous and is deeply imbued with the noble traditions of her high lineage. She would never be prepared to do anything contrary to the accepted pattern of behaviour. Disobedience to parents, secret machinations, elopement, adventurous romance, are all alien to her temperament. The inter-play of these two obstacles supplies the material and colour of the dramatic development. Kamandaki's personal eloquence and her schemes, worked out with a number of helpmates, are aimed at overcoming these obstacles. Malati's marriage to Nandana could have been easily averted by a simple material incident. But the real problem was to persuade Malati, with her sense of virtue, her fear of any out of the way and sinful act, for a prior, secret marriage with her lover. Kamandaki's entire skill and efforts in the first three acts of the play are devoted to accomplish this result.

The second strand of this love story concerns Makaranda and Madayantika. Bhavabhuti has shown Makaranda to be a bosom friend and companion of Madhava, and Madayantika to be the sister of Nandana and also a friend of Malati from the days of childhood. These relationships help the smooth knitting of the subplot with the main plot. Besides it is also ensured that the accomplishment of one event will either include or lead easily to the accomplishment of the other. Makaranda donned the bridal dress intended for Malati and took her place to go through the marriage ceremony with Nandana. This removed the problem before Malati; it enabled her to marry Madhava; and the ruse simultaneously helped Makaranda to get access to the bed-chamber and win Madayantika for himself.

The third strand is that of the love between Kalahamsaka, the attendant of Madhava, and Mandarika, a maid attached to Malati's house. The two attendants are used to help the development of love between Madhava and Malati. Malati had painted Madhava's portrait as a diversion to soothe her ache of love. She handed over the canvas to Lavangika, who entrusted it to Mandarika. Mandarika and Kalahamsaka were lovers. Kalahamsaka saw the picture and, when Mandarika was away, brought it to his master Madhava. Makaranda urged Madhava to draw Malati's portrait on the same canvas. He did so and also wrote a verse below the drawing. Mandarika came searching for the canvas and for Kalahamsaka; and thus the canvas returned to Malati through the same channel. This naturally helped to strengthen the bonds of love between Malati and Madhava.

Bhavabhuti has made a deliberate attempt at building his story with intrigue and suspense. On the background of the king's interest in Malati's marriage and the helplessness of her father, Kamandaki's schemes to bring the young lovers to the Shiva temple and to dupe Nandana appear as ingenious as they are interesting. The tension in the drama arises from such conflict of interests, and the remedies employed to surmount the obstacles add zest to it. Other elements in the story act in a similar way. The deep affection between Madhava and Makaranda for instance, undoubtedly assists the final success of both the love affairs. But it also brings unexpected dangers. When Makaranda rushed to

save Madayantika from the clutches of the tiger, or when he was pursued by armed guards when he eloped with Madayantika from the house of Nandana, Madhava, on both these occasions, could not be expected to wait for the results calmly. With Madhava jumping to the side of his friend in the fight the potential danger naturally increased. The situation thus becomes more tense and suspense mounts. For a moment the entire fortune of the young lovers is in jeapordy. And the reader-spectator must watch the next development with bated breath. Again, when Madhava loses his mental balance on account of the mysterious disappearance of Malati, and Makaranda thinks of ending his own life, the story comes to a precarious halt. Bhavabhuti's skill in creating such tense situations is in evidence in this play.

There is another angle from which the play may be viewed. Bhavabhuti sets down in the prologue certain features of a good composition like : freely flowing emotions, affection-inspired actions, a theme of love and adventure, complex and wonderful plot, and a dialogue that shines with the skill of art and the polish of culture[10]. Apparently Bhavabhuti wanted to have these qualities and composed his play to achieve the desired effect.

The story is crammed with incidents and happenings. Bhavabhuti keeps them distinct by variation of details. The incidents of love and adventure in the main and the subsidiary plots, the mystery of Malati's disappearance, an unexpected but thrilling rescue from the threshold of death, situations rousing wonder and fear, all these produce a dazzling variety in the theme and development of the dramatic plot. The story also moves from place to place : from the usual and familiar city park, palace, temple, precincts of a Buddhist monastery, to such unusual and terrifying places as the cremation grounds and the supernatural world of aerial regions. The emotions too run from delightful love to heroic fight and war, from gentle feelings tenderly moving the heart to unprecedented dread, abhorrence and fear paralys-

10. MM. I.4:
भूम्ना रसानां गहनाः प्रयोगाः सौहार्दहृद्यानि विचेष्टितानि ।
औद्धत्यमायोजितकामसूत्रं चित्रा कथा वाचि विदग्धता च ॥
also I.7.

ing normal consciousness. Earth and aerial regions, natural and super-natural happenings, familiar and unusual scenes all mingle together in the wide and colourful sweep of the poet's dramatic art.

The men and women who are assisting the young lovers in their love are transparently sympathetic. Their affection is boundless. Kamandaki and her pupils seem to have no purpose in life except making the young lovers happy with the realisation of their dream of love. Even those like the ruling king, who apparently stand in the opposition, have the magnanimity of heart to appreciate the courage and valour of Madhava and Makaranda, and also a deep affection for the young people to feel the pain of grief and worthlessness of life at the loss of Malati. There are young couples here who are ready to die for their beloved ones. There are uncommon friends who are willing to face death for their companions. There are understanding elders who are happy in the happiness of the young. There are servants who are loyal and devoted to their masters, friends who firmly stand by in need, and pupils who obey their preceptor with cheerful faith.

The variety of incidents and characters is paralleled by the variety of emotions which Bhavabhuti brings into this play. The dominating emotion of love permeates down to the sub-plot. Bhavabhuti revels in unfolding the various shades of love: like love rising at first sight, and the indescribable longing and sweet agony that follows; the physical and mental torture of unfulfilled love; the madness of love unhinging the sanity of mind; and the physical thrill of love. Like love, the emotion of pathos, due to separation of lovers and the despair of unfulfilled love, receives a generous treatment. The attack of the tiger rouses the pathetic emotion. After the mysterious disappearance of Malati there is a flood of pathos in the last two acts of the play which carries away all the characters and the central thread of the story. The bravery of Makaranda and Madhava creates an appropriate feeling of heroism. The scene of the cremation ground has the fearful, the abhorrent and the furious. Saudamini's activity introduces the marvellous. Bhavabhuti is not known for humour. He does not indulge in verbal wit and the typical clown (Vidushaka) does not figure in his plays. But the situation in which Makaranda

puts on Malati's robes, goes through the marriage ceremony with Nandana, and even enters the bed-chamber as a new bride, is a laughter-provoking situation worthy of a genuine farce. Equally amusing is Makaranda's pretence of sleep and Madayantika's confession of her love for him made with the belief that the sleeping person was Malati. Curiously enough, the opening *nandi* verse has a humorous touch : When Shiva started his *tandava* dance, Nandi began playing the drum; the deep, reverberating sound was mistaken as a thunder-clap by Kartikeya's peacock and he moved forward; seeing the peacock, Vasuki the serpant was frightened; he hurriedly entered the trunk of Ganesha to seek a hiding place there; Ganesha shook his face violently; the bees drinking the honey-rut from the temples of his elephant-head rose up in agitation; while Ganesha himself stood panting and groaning in fright with the serpent moving in his trunk !

The mingling of the natural and realistic incidents, which are the root of the story, with weird and supernatural happenings endows the drama with an air of thrilling romance. Bhavabhuti tries to provide causal links to connect the multiple happenings, and the variety of emotions they arouse appear to be their natural sequels.

Bhavabhuti boasts that in the *Malatimadhava* he has produced a great and big *prakarana* drama which in its wonderful, variegated charm and brilliance will be unequalled[11]. He speaks with approval of his plot-construction where the turn of events is charming with emotions[12]. The big canvas of the story, the variety of incidents and characters, the unexpected turns that the events take, and the full play given to the emotions are all there in this drama. The stylistic expression has maturity, felicity and depth of meaning—the qualities which result, according to Bhavabhuti, from a combination of poetic genius and scholarship[13]. But Bhavabhuti seems to have forgotten Shudraka

11. Cf. अस्ति वा कुतश्चिदेवंभूतं विचित्ररमणीयोज्ज्वलं महाप्रकरणम् ।
MM. X. 23.$^{16-17}$

12. Cf. अहो सरसरमणीयता संविधानकस्य । MM. VI. 13.$^{3-4}$

13. Cf. MM. I. 7^{cd}: यत् प्रौढत्वमुदारता च वचसां यच्चार्थतो गौरवं
तच्चेदस्ति ततस्तदेव गमकं पाण्डित्यवैदग्ध्ययोः ॥

and Vishakhadatta. The *Mrichchhakatika* and *Devichandragupta* represent the true genre of *prakarana*, the social drama[14]. Shudraka's drama, for instance, is unique in the real-life picture it presents. The characters are men and women of the world. The events are picked up from life. The language which the characters speak is that of everyday speech, and the emotions that move their hearts are what people feel. In comparison Bhavabhuti's *Malatimadhava* is a romantic creation, conceived and executed poetically rather than with a sense of realism and drama.

The play is rooted in social life but there is an unreal air about it. It is due partly to the supernatural factor introduced in the play. More important, however, is the fact that Bhavabhuti lacks a sense of proportion. He describes every event with long-winded ornamental phrases, speeches or narration. The first meeting in the Cupid's garden, the attack of the tiger, the episode at the cremation grounds, the search of Madhava for Malati, even the intimate conversation among Madayantika, Buddharakshita and Lavangika, are all treated as if they are subjects for literary essays, and every speaker must show his or her poetic ability and intellectual cleverness, *vaidagdhya* and *panditya*, of which Bhavabhuti is so fond. The events lose their dramatic impact under such verbiage. It also affects emotional response. The pre-union pangs of love of Madhava are described in charming and moving verses. But how old is Madhava's love so that he should feel such heart-rending agony? The pathos is similarly over-drawn. Bhavabhuti must have modelled Madhava's search for Malati on the search of Pururavas for Urvashi in Kalidasa's *Vikramorvashiya*; and he probably wished to outdo Kalidasa. But this, as well as the picture of Kamandaki, the king and the citizens mourning over Malati's disappearance, are not likely to move the spectators. This is not the sentiment of pathos that grips the heart; it is pathetic sentimentality presented with the art of poetry.

Bhavabhuti's plot-construction is also not above reproach. The element of coincidence has a large share in smoothening difficulties in the development of the story. The tiger episode, for

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14. See Dr. Raghavan : *The Social Play in Sanskrit*, *op. cit.*

instance, comes very handy for Kamandaki; it enables Makaranda to save Madayantika's life; they fall in love with each other; and Kamandaki's second objective of uniting Makaranda and Madayantika is thus well-nigh achieved. Madhava appears on the scene at the correct moment when Aghoraghanta is about to kill Malati. On this occasion Madhava himself cannot but observe that it is a curious coincidence[15]. Malati's final rescue by Saudamini is yet another chance occurrence. It is true that life is full of coincidences. The incidents referred to can be explained also as dramatic necessity. But we do not expect coincidences in great art. Moreover, it is not flattering to the character of Kamandaki who plays such a central and controlling role in this story.

The chief appeal of the *Malatimadhava*, therefore, must remain in its story of love and adventure, the unusual picture of the Kapalikas, their ritual of human sacrifice, the scene of the cremation ground with the attendant emotions of *raudra* and *bibhatsa*, and the lavish poetry of Bhavabhuti which can capture deep and exalted emotion.

3. Uttararamacharita

(I)

Uttararamacharita has all the signs of the poet's maturity of mind, a sense of workmanship and drama, an acute understanding of human mind and of some of the deep values of life. Instead of building a play by raising a structure of material happenings and incidents, Bhavabhuti seems to have turned to the probing of human mind, and to weaving his dramatic design with the psychological actions and reactions of his characters.

The play intends to unfold the later history (*uttara-charita*) of Rama's life, beginning with the reign of Rama and the abandonment of Sita till the end, where Rama and Sita are brought together in a permanent union of love and happiness. The play is a sequel to *Mahaviracharita*; the two plays together cover the whole story of Ramayana. But there is a profound difference between them, not only in the poet's intent but also in dramatic design and art

15. Cf. अहो नु खलु भोः तदेतत् काकतालीयं नाम । MM. V. 27.[3]

values. As in the first Rama play, there is a search here too for a central theme that would hold together all the events in the story in an unified whole. But in the *Mahaviracharita* an external motif imposed on the story binds its events together; in the *Uttararamacharita* there is a psychological motif that works from inside to the outside, and the familiar incidents in the Ramayana appear as natural pieces that fit into the total design. Bhavabhuti follows the Ramayana, but deviates also from it, as in the first play. The innovations here are not merely departures; they have the appearance of dramatic inventions which change the Ramayana story. Valmiki's epic poem ends with disappearance of Sita into the depth of the earth. Bhavabhuti's play closes on a happy and permanent union of the loving couple, made possible by the removal of injustice caused by the action of Rama.

The play begins immediately after the coronation of Rama. Sita's father Janaka and all other guests have left. There is a feeling of loneliness and sadness which inevitably comes at the end of festivities. The elders in the royal house have been summoned to attend a twelve-year sacrificial session started by Rishyshringa. The young couple and Lakshmana are left in the palace because Sita is far advanced in pregnancy. To provide a diversion and amuse Sita's mind, Lakshmana brings the picture-scroll which was specially ordered to be prepared. It depicts the early life of Rama. Bhavabhuti seems to bring by a flash-back the *purva charita* of Rama as a background to unify the two into a complete whole. The pictures also provide an occasion to touch the varied qualities of Rama's outstanding character, and the deep love that binds the husband and wife. While viewing the pictures Sita feels an urge to visit the vicinity of Bhagirathi. Rama orders the arrangements for the same to be made immediately. Assured of Rama's concern and love, the tired Sita falls asleep on the arms of Rama. At that very moment, Durmukha, the private emissary of Rama, enters to give the dreadful news that the people in the kingdom were not talking well of Sita, and because of her long stay in captivity in Lanka they were doubtful of her purity. Rama is stunned by the news. He is new to his kingly rule; there are no elders by his side to advise him; but he is full of righteous belief in the integrity of his subjects. And fired by the ideals practised

by his ancestors and by the resplendent reputation of the Solar race, he takes the sudden decision to abandon Sita. He silences Durmukha and indirectly Lakshmana by an exercise of his kingly authority and sticks to his one-sided decision. The innocent Sita thinks that she is being taken away in a chariot in fulfilment of her own longing to roam in the woodlands and bathe in the Bhagirathi, hardly knowing that Rama was abandoning her.

The second and the third acts are continuous. But twelve years have passed since Sita was cruelly deserted. An unexpected event brings Rama to the far south in Dandaka. A Brahmin's son dies a premature death. The cause is said to be the sin of a *shudra*, Shambuka, practising penance permissible only for the higher castes. Rama has to go to Panchavati to kill the Shudra-muni in discharge of his kingly responsibilities. Rama performs this duty with outward calm but with agony in his heart.

This glimpse into the mind of Rama is a staggering revelation. It shows that he sacrificed mercy, love, happiness and even Sita herself to satisfy his people. But the ache in his heart and his love for Sita remained unshaken even after the passage of twelve years. Rama presented outwardly a solemn and calm appearance to the people around him. But his heart was a cauldron of boiling emotions, ready to burst at any moment. That moment was brought near by the episode of Shambuka. Once in Dandaka, Rama would naturally move to Janasthana, Panchavati and the region of Godavari. These were the places where Rama had lived with Sita in his exile before she was abducted. The familiar sights and sounds would take the lid off the urn of Rama's suppressed sorrow. And now all alone, away from his people, the pent-up agony might easily break the heart of Rama. Bhavabhuti arranges a completely new set of circumstances, brimming with dramatic interest and full of psychological revelations, to meet this situation.

Arranging a scene, at the beginning of act II, between the sylvan deity of Janasthana, Vasanti, who was the beloved companion of Sita during her forest residence, and a migrating student of philosophy, Atreyi, Bhavabhuti conveys some vital information. Atreyi left Valmiki's hermitage and was proceeding to Agastya's *ashrama*, because she could not keep pace in her

studies with the exceptionally brilliant twins, Kusha and Lava. She also reports the incident of Valmiki's poetic inspiration, the divine blessings, and the composition of Ramayana. Realising the identity of Vasanti, Atreyi gives her other details which concern the abandonment of Sita, the completion of Rishyashringa's sacrificial session, the decision of Rama's mothers not to go back to Ayodhya, where Sita did not exist, but stay in Valmiki's hermitage, the start of Ashvamedha by Rama and his installation of a golden image of Sita for ritual purpose. In another similar scene prefixed to the third act between two personified rivers, Murala and Tamasa, Bhavabhuti informs his audience that Sita threw herself in the Ganges to end her life. She was saved by the holy river, who, along with Sita's mother Prithivi, took her and her twin sons, who were born in the waters, to the hermitage of Valmiki. The Sage looked after her and saw to the proper training and education of the boys. Bhagirathi came to know of Rama's visit to Panchavati and brought Sita with her under the pretext of performing the twelve-year anniversary rite of Kusha and Lava and paying personal homage to Sun, the proginator of the Raghu family. Sita was bestowed with a special power which made her invisible to others. On the other side, Agastya's wife Lopamudra was equally concerned with the safety of Rama. She sent a message through Murala to Godavari to refresh Rama with cool and moist breezes if Rama fainted in the region of Panchavati; and Tamasa was instructed to act as a personal escort of Sita. With such care and pre-arrangement, Bhavabhuti brings Rama and Sita together in a meeting. The expected does happen. Rama meets Vasanti. She leads him from one object or place to another, each associated deeply with the memories of love. Unable to control his sorrow, Rama faints several times; and Sita, invisible to Rama or Vasanti, rushes forward at Tamasa's goading, to revive Rama with the nectar-like touch of her hand. Rama is puzzled. He had believed that Sita must have perished, and cannibals must have finished her body. Vasanti is more deeply hurt at the abandonment of Sita. She assails Rama with queries and accusations. In the solitude of Panchavati Rama confesses that he abandoned Sita, not because he did not love her or ceased to love her. Pleasing

the people (*prajanuranjana*) was a family vow. Rama had to sacrifice love for stern duty. But he had not taken a second wife even as a ritual necessity. Whatever his personal opinion about Sita's purity, his lips were sealed as a king and his freedom circumscribed. In attending to kingly duly there was no scope for personal feelings of a husband. Sita hears these words of Rama and with her own eyes she sees him suffer mortally. She is so moved that her resentment against Rama melts away. Instead, she takes the side of Rama and reproaches Vasanti for her blunt and cruel accusation of Rama. The truth is that the direct evidence of Rama's love, his terrible sorrow, and the explanation he has given for his action, have removed the dart of shame and agony that rankled Sita's heart from the moment of her abandonment. In this superbly conceived and most artistically executed scene, Bhavabhuti renders full poetic justice to Sita for the unmerited wrongs heaped on her, and achieves perfect psychological rapprochement between the loving husband and wife whom destiny had cruelly separated.

The scene now shifts to the hermitage of Valmiki and its surroundings. The arrival of Janaka has created a holiday mood. The mothers of Rama are already there. Janaka is deeply hurt, bitter and angry at the action of Rama in abandoning Sita. His meeting with Kausalya, not only a relative but also an old friend, is therefore not smooth. Arundhati has to intervene to bring the rising tempers down. Janaka has become very touchy and any reference to Sita (as in Lava's mention of Valmiki's composition of *Ramayana*) serves only to provoke him. He openly accuses Rama for failing in his kingly duties, for listening to the chatter of irresponsible people, and for taking a precipitate decision. He is ready to punish Rama either with his bow or by cursing him. Kausalya is privately ashamed of Rama's conduct. Arundhati pleads for pardon, saying that Rama had to perform his duties towards his subjects and, whatever his action, he was after all a son to Janaka. In this tension there is a diversion. Lava intrigues Kausalya and others; he looks so much like Sita! Arundhati has learnt from Bhagirathi the secret of Sita's survival and the birth of her twin sons. But the time has not come for revelations. Lava tells an interesting news : Valmiki has written a drama on

Rama's life; the manuscript is sent with Kusha to Bharatamuni and its production is arranged! At this moment Lava is pulled away by his mates, because they have spotted a new thing, a horse ! Lava recognises the sacrificial horse. The boastful words of the guards about Rama's prowess anger him. He defies them, seizes the horse, and prepares for a fight.

Lava works havoc with the army guarding the sacrificial horse. Lakshmana's son Chandraketu who commands the army has to meet Lava in a personal combat to save his army. Lava had sent it into sleep by employing the Jrimbhaka missile. Sumantra is intrigued by this, because the missile is supposed to be known only to Rama. He is also struck by the outstanding features of resemblance that Lava has with the members of Raghu family. The mystery baffles him. Lava and Chandraketu feel a mutual attraction that equally puzzles them. But exchange of courtesy leads to words, and then to hot words. Lava is frank in his disapproval of the arrogance shown by the soldiers of Rama. He ridicules some actions even of Rama and refuses to recognise him as a matchless hero in all the worlds. This angers Chandraketu beyond words, and the two boys enter into a fight.

The duel might have turned into a disaster. Fortunately, Rama returning from Panchavati in his aerial car saw the fight and alighted to stop it. Kusha enters the scene now in order to aid Lava in his fight. But the picture now changes. Rama is himself drawn mysteriously to the boys. Recognition dawns on his mind and gradually he is convinced that the boys must be his own sons. Like Dushyanta recognising various signs about Sarvadamana in Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*, Bhavabhuti's Rama too sums up the evident signs in a soliloquy: the royal traits; unmistakable family stamp; astounding resemblance of the two boys to Sita, vicinity of Valmiki's hermitage where Sita was abandoned; age and prowess of the boys, especially their knowledge of Jrimbhaka missiles; the fact that they are twins, signs of which Rama had noticed in Sita's pregnancy and which Sita had later confirmed. Rama is moved to tears and is deeply disturbed in mind when Kusha and Lava recite Ramayana verses to him. But he prepares himself to meet the elders in the ashrama.

Valmiki's play on the event of Sita's abandonment is in production. The real Sita plays her own role; the others are acted by the nymphs of heaven. In a theatre- pendal erected on the shores of the Ganges, Valmiki has managed to bring the denizens of the seven worlds and the citizens in Rama's kingdom as spectators of the dramatic spectacle. It shows Sita's attempt at suicide and the divine agencies acknowledging her absolute purity and saving her life. The dramatist (Valmiki or Bhavabhuti) performs a final miracle to show Sita rising up from the waters of the Ganges. The people are awed by the spectacle and feel crushed with shame for the doubts they had raised about Sita's purity. When Arundhati asks them their opinion about Sita's acceptance in the Solar family, they bow down in reverence to Sita. This gesture of obeisance on the part of Rama's public is the final verdict on Sita's purity, an admission of the terrible wrong done to her by the wayward people and indirectly by Rama in accepting their scandalous gossip. The way is now clear for an abiding, happy reunion.

(II)

There is no question of Bhavabhuti's unbounded respect for Valmiki's poetic talents, nor of his personal devotion to Rama as a divinity in human shape. Yet he has introduced bold innovations and re-created the Ramakatha in a new form transforming it into a moving human story. It will be a mistake to suppose that a happy end contrary to the epic story is arranged only because the rules and conventions of Sanskrit dramaturgy forbid the showing of the hero's or heroine's death on the stage. The happy ending is a poetic justice to the love of a husband and wife. True love binds a couple together in perfect understanding and no estrangement is really possible. But if it were to occur, if a husband deserted his wife for reasons extraneous to their love, art would demand that they were reunited. A polygamous society may not care for a woman's feelings. An artist, however, would strive to do justice to the wronged wife and show that the husband returned to her, repentent and chastened. This is the way of art and it gives meaning to mutual love and understanding. Bhasa

showed this in his *Svapnavasavadatta* and Kalidasa in his *Shakuntala*. Bhavabhuti's *Uttararamacharita* has the same underlying conception. To work out his dramatic design accordingly, Bhavabhuti does not hesitate to modify or alter some details in the original and invent others.

The picture-gallery scene in the first act may have been suggested by Kalidasa's reference in the *Raghuvamsha*. Bhavabhuti, however, uses it to link the earlier life of Rama with his later life; to underline the deep love that existed between Rama and Sita, love that blossomed and grew into a unity of twin hearts; to picture the ups and downs in the life of the couple; and to provide thereby a premonition of coming separation. Bringing Rama into Panchavati and arranging his meeting with Sita is another innovation of Bhavabhuti. And to accomplish it, Bhavabhuti creates new characters like Atreyi and Vasanti, uses supernatural characters like the personified rivers and adds supernatural touches like Sita being invisible to Vasanti and also to Rama though he experiences the touch of her hand. In spite of the extra-ordinary colour, the situation is human and compulsive for what art intends to achieve. Bhavabhuti brings through it full explanation and poetic justice to the wronged wife, while not allowing resentment and bitterness to smother mutual love. The events of acts IV to VI are centralised in Valmiki's ashrama. The necessary characters are assembled there; this is convincingly done; for, the reason supplied by the dramatist is psychological, arising out of the initial action of Rama, that of abandoning Sita. The 'play within the play' (*garbhanataka*), mentioned in the fourth act and actually staged in the seventh is another significant innovation of Bhavabhuti. Bhavabhuti writes new literary history by making Valmiki a dramatist. But it is the most effective art device by which the malicious public are made conscious of the wrong they have done, and Bhavabhuti is enabled to render public justice to Sita, an innocent victim of irresponsible gossip. The show was also compulsive for Rama's sake: He had never doubted Sita's purity. But he did not think that his subjects were deliberately wicked. It was his duty to satisfy them. The testimony of Valmiki or Arundhati may or may not have convinced the people about Sita's innocence and purity. As a king Rama wanted

the people to give their united consent before he could take Sita back. The *garbhanataka* achieves this purpose. To divine the strength and weakness of Rama's character accurately and to weave the dramatic texture so as to realise the central conception is a marvellous achievement in literary creation.

Bhavabhuti's art reaches certain heights in other respects also of dramatic construction and poetic treatment. While the picture-gallery scene has a vivid impact, it is also a mingling of sadness, of human tragedy and of unique love. The scene between Rama and the shadow-Sita, in the third act, is unparallelled in its moving appeal. The tragic helplessness of Rama on the one hand, and the pain and anger of Vasanti on the other, seem to be matched by the variety of emotions through which Sita passes from moment to moment. The encounter of Rama with his sons is a joy that swims in the tears of deep sorrow. The gaiety and abandon of the children in Valmiki's hermitage present a contrast to the tense atmosphere that Janaka's anger creates. And the descriptions of the majestic and awesome aspects of nature, especially in the second act, are equally balanced by the fury of fight in the fifth and the solemn dramatic spectacle in the seventh act.

In contriving certain situations Bhavabhuti has used his dramatic and poetic skill to the full. For example, Rama is shown to be alone when he has to take the momentous decision of his life. The gap of twelve years that separates the first from the second and third acts is artistically filled with numerous suggestive touches : the young one of the elephant and of the peacock have now come in their youth; changes have taken place in the external aspects of nature; the twelve-year sacrificial session is over; Sita has arrived to perform the twelfth-year anniversary rite of her sons; a son is born to Lakshmana and is competent to lead an army; Janaka has entered Vanaprastha ashrama; Shatrughna's war with Lavana is over. Bhavabhuti has taken equal care to see that the dramatic spectacle in the final act does not come as an unexpected surprise; preparations for it are started from the fourth act.

One sees that Bhavabhuti has turned inwards in this play. He uses a number of events and situations, as in his earlier plays.

But the main spring of dramatic action in the *Uttararamacharita* is psychological. An action or an event and its psychological reactions generate a series of happenings and these develop the dramatic story. Remarkable from this point of view are the long speeches that Bhavabhuti gives to Rama. They are soliloquies; and they are a fine revelation of the thoughts and emotions that grip the mind of Rama at critical moments in his life : as when he has to take decision about Sita, when he is called upon to kil. Shambuka, and when he is confronted with Kusha and Laval Usually Bhavabhuti errs on the side of excess in delineating an emotion. This is true to some extent about pathos in this play. But Bhavabhuti brings here a new angle on this human emotion. He avows that pathos is the only emotion, the others merely aspects of it. This is true generally of human life, and particularly of the life of Rama. Bhavabhuti did not want to make a tragedy out of the Ramakatha. But in recognising the central place of sorrow in life, where joy or laughter, heroic or marvellous experiences appear like bubbles and ripples on the surface of life's stream, Bhavabhuti is, no doubt, emphasising the human appeal of the story of Rama[16]. Such an insight is a credit to Bhavabhuti as an artist.

In Bhavabhuti's treatment the character of Rama is revealed in a new light. Rama is neither cold nor cruel. The warmth of his kingly ideals may melt his softer feelings, and duty may put on a stern merciless face. But there is another side to the nature of Rama. He is a loving person and, above all, a loving husband. Even at a mature age he gets a thrilling sensation at the casual touch of his wife. His very sensitiveness and emotionalism have enabled him to scale the heights and probe the depths of such overwhelming love as few mortals can experience. In taking the decision of abandoning Sita, Rama acted only as a king. In being loyal to his duty he tried to crush the husband in him. But that was not to be so. Though harder than adamant in the discharge of his duty, he was softer than a flower where emotion of love

16. The statement occurs in URC. III. 47. For a fuller discussion see my *Uttararamacharita*, ed., Introduction, pp. 104-111. Also, my ***Tragedy and Sanskrit Drama***, pp. 55-61.

was concerned[17]. The conflict between king and husband has therefore become perpetual with him. It did not end with his momentous decision. On the contrary, Rama himself had started doubting the correctness of his political decision, as his hesitation in killing Shambuka and his reply to Vasanti concerning the peoples' talk about Sita clearly show. The torn mind of Rama is an aspect of human tragedy. There is nothing divine about it. Only, Rama has greater than human stature; so he bears his agony with super-human courage and dignity. Yet the human element is there; and it raises questions which no poet dared ask before as Bhavabhuti did. Did Rama act rightly as a king, as a husband ? The commonly expected answer is that Rama may have failed Sita as a husband; but as a king what he did was an ideal which no one could ever reach. Bhavabhuti's play would show that he had a different answer.

The abandonment of Sita has a dual aspect : personal, which concerns the couple themselves, and the public, which is concerned with Rama's decision as a king. Bhavabhuti has shown such a fine understanding between Rama and Sita that, if Rama had taken Sita into his confidence and told her about the public scandal, she would have felt neither the hurt nor the shame of her desertion as she did. She was fully appreciative of the ideals cherished by Raghu-kula[18]. Besides, her love for Rama was so absorbing that any sacrifice, including the offer of her own life, would have been spontaneous for her to make her Rama happy. Unfortunately, the very love which was the strength of Rama's life made him weak at the critical moment. He could not muster courage to tell Sita that he was abandoning her. He did this with

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17. Cf. Vasanti's observation, URC. II. 7 :
वज्रादपि कठोराणि मृदूनि कुसुमादपि ।
लोकोत्तराणां चेतांसि को नु विज्ञातुमर्हति ॥

18. On receiving Vasishtha's message about kingly duty, Rama says :
स्नेहं दयां च सौख्यं च यदि वा जानकीमपि ।
आराधनाय लोकस्य मुञ्चतो नास्ति मे व्यथा ॥ I.12.
And Sita immediately responds by saying,
अत एव राघवकुलधुरंधरः आर्यपुत्रः ।

a forced cruelty, like a butcher killing his pet bird[19]. Justice, therefore, demands that Sita gets an explanation for this unthinkable act on the part of Rama, and also an open assurance that his love had not changed or vanished. The second and the third acts of the play are designed to accomplish this. If the existing social and religious law was biassed in favour of the male, it was the supreme task of poetic art to be fair to the wronged woman.

Bhavabhuti is bold to question the wisdom of Rama's action as a king. Open criticism comes from Janaka. Lava's attacks are child-like, innocent and veiled[20]. But both hit at the very kingly dignity of Rama who has been held in admiration as the most ideal of kings. Bhavabhuti courageously allows the values of art to triumph over his personal emotions and exposes Rama. Janaka has the authority to criticise because he combines a seasoned ruler of people and a profound philosopher of life in his unique personality. Janaka is frankly of the opinion that Rama's action was precipitate and one-sided. Pleasing the people did not mean listening to the irresponsible prattle of all and sundry. A king's subjects comprise mostly old and decrepit people, women and children, and the self-centered brahmin community[21]. A king certainly owes duty to his people; but he has to use his discretion, judgement and reason. It was necessary that Rama learnt this political lesson lest some one else suffered at his hands. It is to accomplish this result that Bhavabhuti designed fourth to sixth acts. Then only is the public shown their baseless folly. The way to the final re-union of Rama and Sita is thus paved through the

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19. Cf. URC. 1.45, 46, 49.

20. Cf. Lava's reaction to the soldier's announcement, IV. 27 ff.; and his replies to Chandraketu, V. 28, 32, 34. See, earlier pages, summary of the plot.

21. Janaka's words are :

    अहो निर्दयता दुरात्मनां पौराणाम् । अहो रामस्य राज्ञः क्षिप्रकारिता ।

    and

    क्रोधस्य ज्वलितुं झटित्यवसरः चापेन शापेन वा । IV. 25^{d}.

    About the people he says :

    भूयिष्ठद्विजबालवृद्धविकलस्त्रैणश्च पौरो जनः ॥ IV. 25$_{d}$.

personal and public satisfaction of the issues that Rama's action had raised[22].

Uttararamacharita is not completely free from the obtrusion of the dramatist's literary personality and the defects of his stylised presentation. But his artistic concept and design, his deep understanding of human feelings, the sweep of his imaginative faculty, and the profound significance he has bestowed on the Rama story make up amply for the defects and make this play one of the finest treasures of Sanskrit literature.

22. See, besides my Introduction to *Uttararamacharita*, pp. 88-103, my article "The dramatic problem of *Uttararamachaita*", in *Bharatiya Vidya*, Vol. XXX (1970), issued in April 1973.

CHAPTER FIVE

BHAVABHUTI'S ART

Awareness of values

WHEN Bhavabhuti wrote his first play, the *Mahaviracharita*, his impressionable mind seems to have been dazzled by conflict of great personalities, splendour of heroism, and marvels of the uncommon or supernatural. He essayed to capture these qualities in his writing, and used language that carried the stamp of his Shastric training and erudition[1]. But it did not take long for him to realise the difference between erudition and poetic insight. He admits in his preface to *Malatimadhava* that Vedic and Upanishadic learning and knowledge of several branches of philosophy do not make the equipment of a poet. But he still thought that varied and exuberant delineation of emotion, search for affection in human relationship and behaviour, piling of incidents around the most engrossing feeling of love, romance and adventure, and highly polished literary expression, were the ingredients of an art composition. He still lingered on the charming externals, an ingeniously contrived plot and an impressive style of writing[2]. There is a human angle in his social play; but it is only in the *Uttararamacharita* that Bhavabhuti shows maturity and awareness of the deeper function of art.

1. See MVC. I. 2, 3, 6.
2. See MM. I. 4; Cf. also I. 7.^{cd}

The value of literature does not lie so much in literary flourish, rhetorical finish and craft—although they are always a source of pleasure—as it does in the human appeal it provides and in the interpretation of life it offers. Human society is by nature conservative and clings to values handed down by long tradition. With changing conditions the accepted precepts may prove to be inconvenient or even unfair to certain elements or individuals in society. If a social leader does not appear on the scene to augur a renaissance or a revolution, it will always be the supreme function of art to excite in men the awareness of changing human values and open their eyes to the unfairness, injustice, selfishness and cruelty that surround human relationships.

Mutual love, for instance, spontaneously blossoming in young hearts should really be the foundation of marriage. But a girl's father is forced to marry her to his king's favourite under political pressure. A nun has then to step in to play the role of a match-maker and devise schemes to overcome obstacles. Bhavabhuti seems to be pained at heart by such travesty of human life. But in the earlier two plays he devoted his attention mainly to portray ideal conduct and relationship in human affairs and suggest through it certain acceptable norms and values. In the *Uttararamacharita* his tone is lofty and yet critical. He shows Rama and Sita as a divinely blessed couple in whom love reaches its perfection[3]. But he is equally frank in criticising accepted pre-cepts and forms of human behaviour in other spheres of life. The belief that a Shudra's penance should cause the premature death of a brahmin boy seems to need a re-examination when we find Rama hesitating and reproaching himself while killing Shambuka. With similar courage and frankness Bhavabhuti exposes the accepted norms of kingly dignity and the exaggerat-ed notion of *prajanuranjana*. Whatever be orthodox reaction to Bhavabhuti's treatment of his idealised and idolized hero, his revelations are deeply significant for art and for human life.

3. See URC I. 39 :

अद्वैतं सुखदुःखयोरनुगतं सर्वास्ववस्थासु यद्
विश्रामो हृदयस्य यत्र जरसा यस्मिन्नहार्यो रसः ।
कालेनावरणात्ययात्परिणते यत् स्नेहसारे स्थितं
भद्रं तस्य सुमानुषस्य कथमप्येकं हि तत् प्राप्यते ॥

Bhavabhuti has given more thought to the relationship between man and woman. In a society ridden with religious precepts and characterised by complete domination of the male, the woman's role in life was inevitably of a loyal and submissive partner. She was virtually a slave; at best, an ideal housewife who nobly resigned to her lot, never opposed her husband, and greeted the rival wives with a friendly smile. The forms of *svayamvara* and *gandharva* marriage existed, of course, as expressions of spontaneous and free love. But they must have been the privileges of aristocracy and used in exceptional cases. Under the influence of a polygamous morality, it was the woman's purity of character that was always called into question; man was free to pursue his love affairs. Real conjugal love, therefore, was a poetic ideal that was rarely translated into reality. It is remarkable then that Bhavabhuti's heroes are monogamous and to them love is an absorbing passion. In the *Uttararamacharita* Bhavabhuti withdraws the divine halo that has surrounded Rama and Sita and shows them as a human couple, intensely in love with one another, still retaining the thrill of love even in advancing years. It is married love that has given them perfect understanding of each other, the strength to endure any calamity, shame or anguish, and a largeness of heart to forbear and forgive. Bhavabhuti has taken further care to render personal and public justice to the wronged wife, invariably victimised by the prevailing precepts of social morality. It is by providing a profound outlook on life and its values that Bhavabhuti's art climbs to greater heights.

Art and Craft

The literary scene which precedes the appearance of Bhavabhuti is generally characterised by gaiety and amusement. Bhasa had tackled epic themes in his Ramayana and Mahabharata plays and used heroic sentiment in many of them. But his age was past, although the memory of Bhasa's great achievement persisted as the references to him by Kalidasa and Banabhatta show. It appears that the Sanskrit drama had come to settle down into the pattern of a love-comedy. The pattern had its popular appeal. A story of love drawn from ancient myth or legend revolving round a royal figure or an impressive youth of a folk tale was pleasing in itself. Presented in a lighter vein, or sometimes seriously, with

a touch of laughter, song and dance, and pleasing poetry, a comedy of love would rarely fail to attract even sophisticated spectators and earn considerable reputation for the dramatist. This was a dramatic vogue to which the plays of Kalidasa had given a prestige. King Shri Harsha modelled his *natikas* on Kalidasa's love-comedy which proved to be a great success. Between the age of Kalidasa and the period when Bhavabhuti began his literary career, the social drama had attained a new height. The most important and all-time great play in the genre was Shudraka's *Mrichchhakatika*; and equally remarkable was Vishakhadatta's *Devi-chandragupta*, a historical theme treated in social colour[4]. There was also a revival of epic themes for dramatic writing. King Yashovarman, who later patronised Bhavabhuti, was the author of the *Ramabhyudaya*. A number of Rama plays have now been reconstructed from literary allusions and notices[5]. It may not be possible to state the precise source of Bhavabhuti's inspiration. But a study of his plays shows that he preferred the new vogue to the established and popular light comedy. In doing so he further tried his own literary experiments. For instance, he presented his first play on the Ramakatha as an illustration of *vira rasa* or the heroic sentiment, and gave it its due place in the other two plays as well. In a way, this was a revival of the old tradition found in the Bhasa plays or Vishakhadatta's *Mudrarakshasa*. But it was a departure from the current popular practice. Bhavabhuti turned to the social play and the theme of love in the *Malatimadhava*. Here he dropped the usual atmosphere of polygamy and showed both his principal and secondary heroes monogamous. He also did away with fun and pleasantry, avoided the traditional Vidushaka[6], and gave an earnest treatment to the theme of love.

4. See : Dr. Raghavan : *The Social Play in Sanskrit*, *op. cit*.

5. See : Dr. Raghavan : *Some Old Lost Rama Plays*, Annamalai University, 1961.

6. The *prakarana* drama has a Vidushaka. See the *Mrichchhakatika*. The Rama plays are not expected to have the character of the clown. But two later plays have it. The *Ullagharaghava* of Someshvara (friend and protege of Vastupala of Gujarat, first half of the 13th cent. A.D.) has the Vidushaka as the *narma-mitra* of Rama; *Adbhutadarpana* of Mahadeva (first half of the 17th cent. A.D.) shows the Vidushaka as an associate of king Ravana.

The serious vein in which Bhavabhuti wrote this comedy of love, as he did his other plays, was probably consistent with his own temperament. It was neveretheless a new experiment. In the *Uttararamacharita* Bhavabhuti tried yet another thing. He let the entire dramatic action revolve round *karuna rasa* or the sentiment of pathos. There is no doubt that the story of Rama helped him to perform such an experiment; no other story could have yielded to such a treatment in dramatic form. But that may not minimize the value of what he did. It is not known for certain whether Bhavabhuti's plays won approbation of the contemporary elite. Perhaps they did not. His failure is not important for literary history; his serious purpose and courageous experiments in themselves are.

Bhavabhuti's themes are more suitable for lengthy poetry than for drama. But he has the sense to weave his story in a centrally running thread in order to give his dramatic structure the shape of an integrated whole. His attempt to unify the story of Rama's life in his first play has been described earlier. The *Malatimadhava* is a structure of innumerable incidents and happenings, which Bhavabhuti attempts to hold together by a chain of reasoning where one link leads to the other. Bhavabhuti's effort in these two plays has not been always successful; there are loopholes in these two plays. But his *Uttararamacharita* is in a different category. Conception of central theme and definite dramatic problem have given this play a unitary design, so that the action of every act in the drama serves to develop the plot and accomplish the central purpose.

Bhavabhuti has a fondness for describing emotions at length. Such descriptions may be fascinating as poetry. They may also project the distinctive quality of literature as emotional experience (*rasa-bhava-darshana*), if the writer adhered to the principle of propriety. Bhavabhuti's writing often suffers from excess, as we have seen. In the *Uttararamacharita*, however, the emotional approach appears to be as necessary as inevitable. There is a confrontation of emotions in this play: Sympathy for Rama on the one hand and resentment, anger, shame, sadness on the other. Thees emotions are the natural outcome of Rama's action and they permeate the dramatic scenes. The literary skill behind the

emotional picture is impressive. But while it is the skill that mostly impresses us in the earlier plays, in the picture of pathos, for example, in the *Malatimadhava*, the pathos of Rama in the *Uttararamacharita* grips our heart[7]. The difference between art and craft becomes apparent in such cases.

Worthy of note in this regard is the use of dramatic monologue. It is not a new technique. Kalidasa used it in the fourth act of the *Vikramorvashiya*, and Bhavabhuti followed it in the *Malatimadhava* to depict a similar situation. However, when rightly used, the monologues can be very effective. They may appear to suspend physical action, but they are a moving spectacle of the convulsions and transformations through which a human mind goes. Bhavabhuti uses a long monologue for Valin in the *Mahaviracharita*, act V; it is very revealing of his mind torn between allegiance to Ravana and opposition to Rama. In the *Uttararamacharita* there are three monologues assigned to Rama at crucial points in the story: when Rama has to take the fatal decision of abandoning Sita (act I), when Rama visits Dandaka and Janasthana after a lapse of twelve years (act II), and when he meets Kusha and Lava (act VI). It is refreshing to find Bhavabhuti turning from the glamour of physical happenings and embellished expression to a psychological approach to the story and the language of the human heart.

In *Uttararamacharita*, Bhavabhuti's workmanship decidedly reaches the quality of brilliance. If logic determines the sequence of events in this play, psychology—the working of the mind of characters—makes the assembling of characters in a place or a scene natural and convincing. And emotion charging a scene gives the dramatic speeches a significance and effect. The devices of plot-development like description, narration and announcements or speeches delivered from behind the curtain, used freely in earlier plays, are not avoided in the *Uttararamacharita*; but they are restricted; and whenever they are in evidence they serve a better dramatic purpose than merely supply a link in story development. For example, the descriptive narration in the picture-gallery scene is a recollection of past memories, a reflection on

7. The traditional judgement is : 'कारुण्यं भवभूतिरेव तनुते ।'

the emotional nature and traits of the characters, and a colourful prelude that belies the coming event. The description of nature in the second and the third acts is intended to introduce Rama to the familiar sights and sounds and arouse associations that lay buried under a cloak of indifference over a long period. The descriptions have a poetic value of their own; more than that, they are an artistic inspiration which beautifully conveys the passage of twelve years. The fight between Lava and Chandraketu had to be narrated and described according to the convention of Sanskrit Dramaturgy. But the account is not long-winded. And the poetic quality of the expressions is adequate to bring to the fore the sense of heroism, admiration and wonder. The controlled length of the interludes—scenes prefixed to dramatic acts—their suggestive value, and their use as a mode of emotional balance in this play, are indications of developed technique and skill of Bhavabhuti.

Bhavabhuti's use of the supernatural may perhaps be justified by the taste of the contemporary audience. The marvellous (*adbhuta*) was accepted in theory also as an impressive aspect of a theatrical spectacle. In the *Malatimadhava* Malati is carried away by Kapalakundala using her magical power; she is rescued by Saudamini who uses similar yogic powers. But in this realistic play of human emotions and relationships, the supernatural strikes a discordant note, particularly because it is used as a device of plot-construction. In the story of Rama, certain characters and events are in themselves divine or demonaic. No artist could possibly unweave the supernatural halo surrounding personalities in this legendary story. In the *Mahaviracharita*, Bhavabhuti did not make any effort to handle such elements. He retained them; and, as far as possible, brought them in narrative account or reported them in speeches made behind the curtain. The same device is used in the *Uttararamacharita*. Bhagirathi and Prithivi are kept behind the scenes; and the power of the missiles is merely described. In the case of Rama, Sita, Arundhati, Valmiki, Janaka and the Vidyadhara couple, the divine element in them is treated as a mark of respect or reverence, or as a key to their exalted status. Tamasa, Murala and the Jrimbhaka missiles (in the *garbhanataka*) are personified human characters; they speak human

language, act and feel like human beings who are deeply concerned. The presence of Sita in the third act and her being invisible to Rama and Vasanti have a touch of the marvellous. But it is a stage device, because Sita and Tamasa are visible to the spectators, and they can hear their speeches. The miracle of Sita rising up from the river-waters in the *garbhanataka* towards the end of the play is similarly a dramatic necessity, as is the production of Valmiki's play by the heavenly nymphs and the assemblage of spectators from all the worlds. They are however presented through reports. Being a significant part of the poet's dramatic design, he must have permitted this mingling of the natural and the supernatural. Even as it is, it does not go against the grain of the legendary story. On the whole, Bhavabhuti seems to be aware now that the supernatural requires to be handled properly in art design. He has tried to soften its shades and, where possible, transformed the unavoidable supernatural into a believably natural sequence.

Bhavabhuti uses subtle art devices in the *Uttararamacharita*, which shows that he has become introspective in his literary creation. One of these is dramatic irony which literally pervades the play. Consider the instances : the inadvertent reference of Lakshmana to the fire-ordeal and the immediate declaration by Rama that he did not believe in the scandal (act I, 13, 14); Rama assuring Sita that her fear of separation arose only by seeing a painted picture and that it was unreal (act I); the emotional clinging of Rama and Sita to the memories of past life on the eve of a still greater and heart-rending sorrow that awaits them (act I); the dramatic coincidence[8] by which the words of Rama get joined to the words of Pratihari announcing the arrival of Durmukha, which produces the startling suggestion of separation (I. 38. ff.); Sita's loving insistence that Rama must accompany her to the region of the Ganges, and Rama's equally loving rebuke that she must be hard-hearted to imagine that Rama would allow her to go alone (act I); the most tragic circumstance in which Rama is driven to desert Sita when she had fallen asleep on his arm, in complete confidence and love (act I); the entire scene of the

8. Technically this is called *Patakasthanaka*. See *Bharata Natyashastra* XIX. 30 ff.

shadow-presence of Sita (act III) where Rama is able to feel the touch of her hand but not see her is an instance of the cruel irony of fate. In fact, the belief shared by all the characters, except a few, that Sita is no more alive is a kind of irony that runs in the play from the third to the last act. There is another kind of irony which is on the pleasant side. The instances are : Lava telling that he is Valmiki's son (act IV); Lava naturally siding with Janaka in his angry outburst against Rama (act IV. 24a), and, in his own innocent way, finding fault with Rama's acts of valour (act V. 32, 34); Sumantra's feeling that had Rama seen the valour of the unknown boy Lava, his heart would have melted with affection (act V); the detached explanation that Kusha gives of the tears in the eyes of Rama (act VI. 30); the reactions of Rama witnessing the dramatic show till true realisation comes (act VII). Such dramatic irony, both tragic and delightful, is always effective[9].

Defects of writing

The defects of Bhavabhuti's writing are apparent on the surface. Some spectators may react favourably to a drama of fast moving physical action rising to a clash of incidents; others may appreciate the finer spirit of poetry and the deep emotional tone in a play. Bhavabhuti's *Mahaviracharita* and the *Malatimadhava* may answer to one kind of reaction, the *Uttararamacharita*, to the other. But in his playwriting Bhavabhuti has brought a new style of presentation which looks like a legacy from Banabhatta and his contemporary prose writers. Sanskrit drama always used a mixture of prose and verse in the composition of its dialogue. But if verses were loaded with heavy words and rhetorical ornaments, particularly in descriptive parts, a dramatist always took care to keep his prose simple, natural, often colloquial; so that the dialogue used spoken language and avoided literary and cultivated speech. The plays of Bhavabhuti's predecessors, from Bhasa to Harsha, exhibit this quality generally. Bhavabhuti seems to have started the practice of turning out a play as if it were an exercise in literary composition, where a poet's skill in handling language, poetic embellishment and emotion must receive its full measure of use.

9. See my URC. Intr. pp. 134-135.

The later Sanskrit drama is characterised by these features. In point of time, the beginning appears to have been made by Bhavabhuti by composing not dramas but dramatic poems. And in this he may have been tremendously influenced by literary vogues made prestigious by the prose-writers Dandin, Subandhu and Bana, as in his own turn he influenced his successors in the field of drama. Bhavabhuti used the dialogue pattern but wrote like a story-teller elaborating and embellishing his prose and verses. He controlled many of these excesses in the *Uttararamacharita.* Critics have admired Bhavabhuti's art and workmanship in handling individual details in this play, like the dramatic irony in the first act, the delicacy in the portrayal of Sita's gradual surrender in the third act, the fine portrait-picture of Lava, and the simple but moving spectacle of the *garbhanataka* in the last act. It is true, however, that even the *Uttararamacharita* impresses more as a dramatic poem rather than as a stage drama, a reader's pleasure rather than a spectator's delight.

The weakness of Bhavabhuti lies in his strength as a poet[10]. By temperament, innate ability, and the influence of the literary vogue of his day, Bhavabhuti could never approach his dramatic themes with the detachment and control of a play-wright. He was moved as a poet and was carried away emotionally into his stories. This resulted in the two particular features of all his writing: (a) an excess of literary flourish and polish; and (b) an excess of emotionalism. The first destroyed real dramatic dialogue expected in a play; and the second had the effect of making his scenes wallow in sentimentality. Both together were harmful for dramatic writing, because they robbed the characters of their individuality and made the emotion, often very profound, a sort of a literary exhibition rather than an expression of a genuine feeling.

These defects are more prominent in his first two plays. Here the characters are, more or less, ideals and patterns; their individuality is limited. Parashurama and Shatananda show individual traits; but the former portrait is spoiled by the character's excessive and unwarranted use of vituperative language, the second

10. See my URC. Intr. p. 135 ff.

has no chance to grow at all. Even in his social play, where the writer could use his faculty of imagination freely, Bhavabhuti has created types rather than individuals, probably following the conventions of Sanskrit dramaturgy. Makaranda could have been an interesting character; but put in a secondary role his activities take place behind the curtain and the spectators have no chance of seeing this character in action. Kamandaki is modelled on the Parivrajika in Kalidasa's *Malavikagnimitra*; the *Kamasutras* also speak of nuns employed as messengers of love. She could have been a real *sutradhara* in this comedy of love. But her role is spoiled by coincidences and her emotionalism. Kamandaki's breaking down in unchecked sorrow at the disappearance of Malati towards the end of the play is neither consistent with her nun's character nor with her cheerful resourcefulness with which the dramatist has credited her in his play. The *Uttararamacharita*, where many of these defects are toned down as observed earlier, is yet not completely free from excesses of Bhavabhuti's writing. The emotion of Rama, for instance, is sincere and deep; but the excess of tears and swoons, the unceasing talk of the 'dart of sorrow' and of the tearing of heart, tend to become a technique, a mode of literary expression, instead of real pathos that could grip and shake the human heart. There are a host of characters in this play; but with the exception of Rama, Sita, Vasanti, Lava, and, to some extent, Janaka and the clever pupil Saudhataki, there is hardly any real characterization. Bhavabhuti's language in this play is admirable; the dialogue in the fourth act, as in the *garbhanataka*, is a triumph for Bhavabhuti. But Bhavabhuti's fondness for loaded prose and verse often intrudes. The heavy prose speeches given to Sita in the first act and the ornamental language of the Vidhyadhara couple in the interlude of the sixth act are not excusable in dramatic writing.

The truth is that Bhavabhuti lacks self-restraint which is a vital quality of literary art[11]. In speech-writing, narration, description, as well as in emotional delineation, Bhavabhuti lets himself go. He cannot hold himself aloof from his writing; and in drama

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11. See my URC. Intr.

objective approach and detachment are most essential. Bhavabhuti intrudes on his own work and indulges in self-admiration. This is what is known as Bhavabhuti's *egotism*. In his *Malatimadhava* he mentions the qualities of a good play, implying that they are to be found in his writing[12]. He admires his plot-construction and states that a bright and marvellous composition like his play could hardly by found elsewhere[13]. He is not tired of describing his perfect command of expression[14]. Even in the *Uttararamacharita* Vasanti's emotional break-down and fainting become an excuse for him to speak of his own skill in verse-construction and in portrayal of emotion[15]. And Tamasa's comment, 'Oh, what a construction of events!' and the assertion, in the following verse, that *karuna rasa* runs through and dominates life[16], are as much relevant to the particular context as they indicate how Bhavabhuti intrudes on his own work. I would not suggest that Bhavabhuti compares himself to the Creator god who controls the goddess of speech, or to Valmiki, because a verse in the prologue of the *Uttararamacharita* may yield two meanings[17], and because the *garbhanataka* ascribed to Valmiki is, in fact, composed by Bhavabhuti himself. Bhavabhuti has enough piety in him to be humble and full of devotion before divinities; and his reverence for Valmiki is transparent. The

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12. Cf. भूम्ना रसानां गहनाः प्रयोगाः सौहार्दहृद्यानि विचेष्टितानि ।
औद्धत्यमायोजितकामसूत्रं चित्रा कथा वाचि विदग्धता च ॥ MM. I.4.

13. Cf. अहो सरसरमणीयता संविधानकास्य । MM. VI. 13 ff.;
अस्ति वा कुतश्चिदेवंभूतमद्भुतं विचित्ररमणीयोज्ज्वलं प्रकरणम् ।
MM. X. 23. ff.

14. Cf. वश्यवाचः कवेर्वाक्यम् ... । MVC, I.4;
भवभूतिः...स्वकृतिम् एवंगुणभूयसीम् अस्माकं हस्ते समर्पितवान् ।
MM. prologue;
यं ब्रह्माणमियं देवी वाग्वश्यैवानुवर्तते । URC. I. 2.

15. Cf. स्थाने वाक्यनिवृत्तिर्मोहश्च । URC. III, 26. ff.

16. Cf. अहो संविधानकम् ।
एको रसः करुण एव निमित्तभेदाद्
भिन्नः पृथक् पृथगिवाश्रयते विवर्तान् । URC. III. 47.

17. Cf. note (14) above. 'ब्रह्माणं' in the verse, URC. I. 2, may denote ब्रह्मा, the Creator-god, as well as the Brahmin poet Bhavabhuti.

allusions therefore need not be probed further to discover personal vanity of the poet. However, there is no doubt that Bhavabhuti is too personal and egotistic to keep himself away from his writing. His repetitions may also be taken as a reflection of this egotism. When a writer repeats whole verses, parts of verses, sentences and phrases from his earlier play in the next, it only means that he is in love with his own writing[18].

Orthodox criticism too has felt that Bhavabhuti's (a) emotional and poetic excesses and lack of action on the stage, (b) florid, heavy and involved diction which compels even delicate women characters to rattle off jaw-breaking and tongue-twisting speeches, and (*c*) too frequent use of such devices as swooning, and proneness to commit suicide on the part of lovers, lower the value of his dramatic art. The criticism appears to have a force when Bhavabhuti's plays are compared to the works of such masters of Sanskrit drama as Bhasa, Kalidasa and Shudraka.

But many of the things found in Bhavabhuti's writing are common features of the Sanskrit drama. Dramatic style which flowers into literary graces; emotionalism; comparative bigness of canvas and many characters; stress on sentimental delineation rather than on action; dramatic arrangement which tends to produce spectacular emotional response instead of the thrill of conflict : these, most dramatic compositions share in common with each other; the difference is of degree, not of kind. The excesses of Bhavabhuti, therefore, must have an explanation. It is to be found, I think, partly in the poet's own temperament and partly in the conditions of his age. Highly sensitive and very emotional in nature, Bhavabhuti is likely to have experienced mental tension by the opposition from his native people, his relatives and acquaintances who did not approve of his literary pursuits. Lack of prestigious support, like royal favour, may have increased his inward conflict and tension. Yet his confidence in his poetic powers enabled him boldly to defy the family traditions of Vedic learning and priestly career. Literature was the only possible field where he could give free vent to his own ideas and

18. Todar Mall, *The Mahaviracharita*, ed., has made a comprehensive list of Bhavabhuti's repetitions in all his plays; see Intr., pp. —xl-xliii.

an outlet for his mounting tension. The emotional excesses are probably a result of such a psychological situation. On the other hand, the literary traditions of his age appear to have evidently shifted towards a highly cultivated, embellished and imaginative style of writing, in preference to lucid and charming literary expression of the previous age where imagination and emotion were appropriately balanced. It is likely that Bhavabhuti could not resist these trends of the age and followed them in his dramatic writing as well. There is another factor which has a bearing on stage practices. It is possible to assume that the technique of stage production and stage representation had come to settle down by this time, in the seventh century A. D., to well-recognised stage devices and conventions. The excess of emotional representation was probably a concession to the popular taste, a satisfaction which the holiday crowds that came to witness open air performances demanded. And the continuous 'swooning' and 'revival' of characters in sorrow was probably a conventional mode of rendering pathos on the stage and carry its intensified impact to the spectators. In view of such a technique, it is equally possible to imagine that Lava's use of *Jrimbhaka* missiles and their paralysing effect on Chandraketu's army may have been stage-represented with a body of dancers symbolising the missiles and another standing for the army, and the hurling action and the resulting stupefaction being shown by dance pantomime. With such modes and conventions ruling the stage, it is plausible to assume further that playwrights started preparing their scripts suitably and incorporated directives for acting and representation. It will be a mistake to judge Sanskrit drama by the reaction and response of the present day spectators. The choreography of Sanskrit drama is not exactly a result of bad writing and unrealistic theatre. It is determined by the accepted values and conventions of the age. And this should provide, I hope, a correct approach to understanding and appraising Sanskrit drama in general, and Bhavabhuti's plays in particular[19].

19. See my *Uttararamacharita*, Introduction, pp. 140-142 for fuller treatment. Also my *Sanskrit Drama*, Karnatak University, Dharwar, 1975; pp. 93-95; and my *Bharata-Natya-Manjari*, Bhandarkar O. R. Institute, Poona, 1975; pp. xcii—cviii.

Bhavabhuti's Poetry

The obvious defects of Bhavabhuti's writing do not, however, overshadow his talents as a poet which in some respects are extraordinary.

If he seems to boast of his command of expression the boast is not unjustified. Bhavabhuti uses an impressive vocabulary, though he is often partial to an out-of-the-way word or phrase. His language is generally loaded and ornate; yet its richness and grandeur cannot but be appreciated. On this background the sheer simplicity and natural flow of the language used to compose the dialogue among Lava, the pupils and the guests in Valmiki's hermitage, and the dialogue of the *garbhanataka* (both, in *Uttararamacharita*), would appear to be very remarkable. It means that the poet whose habit is to use compounded and ornate language and generally write with an erudite diction can also write with telling simplicity. And this is a sure sign of command of the language which the poet can mould and adapt to suit his purpose. Even when he is using loaded language his ability to produce special effects deserves to be noted. Bhavabhuti can capture into mere words the languid cooing of pigeons in the trees on river-banks[20]; or the twanging of bow-string and the jingling of its tiny bells[21]. Apart from such sound-effects which are onomatopoetic, Bhavabhuti's special skill is to be noticed when he matches his diction and its sound to suggest not merely the sense but a particular feeling or emotion. Lava, for example, expresses a conflict of affection and heroic fury when he stands against Chandraketu ready for a duel combat. The verse in which it is described[22] is so constructed that the soft consonants and alliteration in the first half express an emotion of affection and joy; and the latter half of the verse, using harsh consonants and conjuncts, suggests the effect of martial feeling. A similar verse in Bhavabhuti's first play, suggests Rama's feeling of heroism as he faces the challenge

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20. URC. II. 9^{d} : कूजत्क्लान्तकपोतकुक्कुटकुलाः कूले कुलायद्रुमाः ॥
21. URC. VI. 1^{ab} :

    रणत्करणझञ्झणत्क्वणितकिङ्किणीकं धनुः ।
    ध्वनद्गुरुगुणाटनीकृतकरालकोलाहलम् ॥
22. URC. V. 26

of Parashurama and the feeling of overpowering love with the the nearness of Sita[23].

Another token of poetic skill and command of language is a writer's ability to handle different metres. Bhavabhuti uses various metrical structures with equal ease, starting from his first dramatic composition. In *Malatimadhava* he uses the exceptional *dandaka* metre[24]. It is, at least, one instance where the unusually long metrical pattern and Bhavabhuti's heavy diction have combined to produce an effect which perfectly matches the sound and fury of the *tandava* dance that it describes. Bhavabhuti's mastery of the metres is particularly seen in the *Uttararamacharita* where the choice of a particular metre has proved to be most appropriate for expressing a particular sentiment[25]. The use of *harini*, and especially *shikharini* of which there are not less than thirty verses in this play, shows a fine awareness of the formal structure of a metre and the power of its rhythm to express a particular emotion. The *shikharini* has a natural lull and break and a slow movement; handled carefully it can suggest a slow-creeping joy or heart-moving pathos, both as deeply affecting emotions. Bhavabhuti does this so impressively that it has won him the highest praise from a later theoretician[26].

But this is only an outward aspect of Bhavabhuti's poetry. He possesses powers of imagination and observation worthy of a true poet in as great a measure as Kalidasa does. Bhavabhuti's word-pictures capture such accurate and realistic details that they can serve as a model for a portrait-painter. Noteworthy in this context are: the picture that Rama draws of Parashurama[27],

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23. MVC. II. 22. Cf. also MVC. II. 33, where the first three lines suggest the heroic feeling and the fourth in soft syllables suggests *bhakti*, devotion.

24. MM. V. 23.

25. But this is also found in MVC. Cf. III. 43, III. 48 etc., where the heavy compounds and long metre are used to suggest anger and heroism.

26. Kshemendra, in his *Suvrittatilaka* III. 33, says :
भवभूतेः शिखरिणी निरर्गलतरङ्गिणी । रुचिरा घनसंदर्भे या मयूरीव नृत्यति ॥

27. MVC. II. 26

the picture of Lava as a Kashatriya student[28], or that of Sita as a lovely child[29]; more striking and full of lively details is the word-picture of Sita giving dance lessons to her pet peacock, making her own eyebrows dance, rolling her eyes to follow the circular movements of the dancing peacock, and marking the rhythm of the dance by clapping her palms in perfect time[30].

Bhavabhuti's descriptions of nature show that Nature had not one child, Kalidasa, but another in Bhavabhuti. But there is a difference. Kalidasa was inclined to describe the mild and soft aspects of nature : the tender creepers and flowers; soft leaves and lotus stalks; flowing rivers and tranquil lakes; shady bowers and gentle breezes; the lovely moon and the cool fragrance of the sandal. These images do appea in Bhavabhuti's poetry of love. But it is given to him only tc aint the gorgeous, awe-inspiring, terrific and the weird aspects of nature. If nature appears to have gone into a reverie of calm delight in Kalidasa's poetry, she is bursting with life and passion and roaring with sound and fury in the poetry of Bhavabhuti. He paints such pictures of nature as have magnificance and, often times, a thrilling and awesome charm, as the description of Panchavati and the Dandaka forest in the second and third acts of *Uttararamacharita*, or the description of the cremation grounds in the fifth act of *Malatimadhava* shows. Bhavabhuti stands unequalled, perhaps, in capturing the loathsome (*bibhatsa*), which theoreticians include as a *rasa* but which poets generally avoid. He describes Tataka as wearing bracelets and other ornaments of human skulls and bones, woven in the fibres of entrails, their clash producing a terrific sound with the movement of her body, and her huge and pendent breasts wet with the thick mud of blood that she has drunk and vomitted[31]. The description of a goblin feasting on the raw meat of a corpse in the cremation ground, skinning it and eating the fleshy portions of the body first, and then carving out pieces of meat from cavities of joints and bones is in a similar

28. URC. IV. 26
29. URC. IV. 4
30. URC. III. 19
31. See, MVC. I. 35

strain[32]. If Bhavabhuti could picture such odious and frightening details with unerring accuracy, it is no wonder that he captured the vivid reality of the forests roaring with the noise of wild beasts, where serpents breathe fire and the thirsty lizards drink the dripping sweat of sleeping pythons[33]; where spluttered growls of wild bears reverberate through mountain caverns, and the pungent odour of crushed *sallaki* knots spreads round[34]. Here, in the forest region, hooting owls silence the the noisy crows in a thicket of reeds on a mountain; huge serpents wriggle round sandal-tree trunks in fear of the shouting peacocks[35]; the southerly mountain ranges send their peaks into blue clouds and clamour with the waters of the Godavari girgling through their clefts; rivers meet and their mighty waves rise up to fearful heights and cascade in shattering particles in a noisy clash[36].

Bhavabhuti's astonishing power as a poet is particularly perceived in his description of an emotion. He pictures the calm bliss of the love of Rama and Sita as they are interlocked in loving embrace, whispering delightful nonsense that lovers are fond of, their cheeks close, and so entirely oblivious of the passage of time that night comes to a close but their talk never ends[37]. He describes the timid nervousness of Sita, as she stood before Rama, folding her bud-like palms, and frightened by the annoyance she had caused by her tarrying on the sands of Godavari[38]. When he has to describe a conflict of emotions Bhavabhuti uses a varying technique, by choosing his diction carefully and by exploiting the rhythmic movement of a metrical structure, as noted earlier; but sometimes he achieves the effect by piling vivid details: Unforgettable in this regard is Tamasa's picture of Sita when her heart is torn by conflicting feelings at the sight of Rama's

32. See, MM. V. 16
33. URC. II. 16
34. URC. II. 21
35. URC. II. 29
36. URC. II. 30
37. URC. I. 27
38. URC. III. 37

suffering. Tamasa says to Sita[39] :

Your heart—
aloof in despair, and yet resentful with the
consciousness of the wrong done :
benumbed, due to the sudden meeting in this
long separation :
gracious, on account of goodness :
deeply grieving as a result of the beloved's sorrow :
your heart appears to have melted at this
moment,
thanks to your love !

Bhavabhuti possesses an unequalled power of expressing in forceful terms an emotion that springs from the very depth of heart: Sometimes he uses an imagery of a burning tip of a firebrand thrust obliquely, a bite of poison, or a dart cutting the vitals of heart, when describing the sorrow of Rama[40]; or of an anointment of yellow sandal leaves, a sprinkling of the juice of crushed moon-rays, or an extract of reviving herb, in describing the happiness of Rama at the touch of Sita's hand[41]. Sometimes he uses a series of poetic conceits to express a single idea in multiple ways : Madhava, for instance, says that Malati is permanently lodged in his heart, as if she were merged in him, reflected in him, painted in him, carved in him, embossed in him, stuck into him with the glue of adamant, dug deep into him, fixed in him by the five arrows of Cupid, sewn into him by the intricate thread of ceaseless brooding[42]. But, very often, Bhavabhuti avoids any obvious figurative expression and sets the emotional impact in direct words. Rama says,[43]

This heart in profound agony bursts
but is not split into two pieces.
The benumbed body succumbs to swoon
but does not give up consciousness.

39. URC. III. 13
40. URC. III. 35
41. URC. III. 11. Similar imageries appear in MM. III. 16.
42. MM. V. 10
43. URC. III. 31

The internal burning scorches the frame
but does not turn it into ashes.
Fate pierces my vitals, strikes hard,
but does not sunder my life!

In fact, it is remarkable that this poet who could scarcely avoid the temptation to prefer ornate and sonorous phrases should reach a disarming simplicity of language when he wished to express, sometimes, a moving or profound emotion. Observe, for instance, the simple verses in which Madhava describes his feelings for Malati[44], or Malati's unwavering utterance that she would suffer living death but would not hurt her parents[45]. Bhavabhuti uses short and pithy sentences to express the turmoil in Rama's mind when he has taken the decision of abandoning Sita[46]. In the same way the agony of Vasanti finds expression in these words[47] :

You ruthless! it is true that you love fame.
But could there have been a more terrible
infamy than this?
What must have happened to that fawn-eyed girl
in the forest?
Ah, tell me, O saviour! what do you think of it ?

It is not exactly correct to say that Bhavabhuti has no power of suggestion as Kalidasa has and of which Kalidasa is a master. The contrast between the two poets probably means only that Bhavabhuti is generally very expressive and vivid in describing an emotion, whereas Kalidasa is content to suggest it effectively. Of poetic suggestion, and of deep feeling, there are many instances in the *Uttararamacharita*, like Vasanti's words quoted above,

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44. MM. I. 21, 36.
45. MM. II. 2.
46. URC. I. 46 ff.
47. URC. III. 27

not only in verse but in prose sentences also[48].

Bhavabhuti's temper naturally leads him to an abandon and not to a poetic restraint. This further leads to excess. But the serious strain in his disposition takes him also to the root of things. It is a temperamental fact that Bhavabhuti has no lighter vein and easy humour. But it is also true that Bhavabhuti could not have probed the depth of human feelings without his solemnity and seriousness. The joy, for instance, that a child creates is often described in Sanskrit poetry. But it was given to Bhavabhuti to create a kind of philosophy about that feeling, and state that a child is a thread of love that sews and preserves worldly life, a knot of bliss that binds the loving couple[49]. Mature happiness of married love is mentioned by other poets. But only Bhavabhuti could set in vivid terms the immortality of such love which, by bringing an identity of two souls, creates a repose for heart and a charm which old age cannot take away[50].

Bhavabhuti's exceptional powers as a poet must therefore be recognised inspite of his faults. He is regraded as a master of pathos[51]. More than the poetic delineation of sentiments it is his profound emotional utterance that reveals the rich value of his poetry. It is by this ability that Bhavabhuti could touch the heart

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48. Cf., for instance, URC. III. 7 ff. (दिष्ट्या अपरिहीनधर्मो खलु स राजा । Sita saying this of Rama); IV. 10 ff. (आर्ये गृष्टे, अपि अनामयमस्याः प्रजापालकस्य मातुः । Janaka inquiring after his beloved friend and relation, Kausalya); I. 8. ff. (कञ्चुकी—रामभद्र...। (इत्यर्धोक्ते साशङ्कम्) महाराज। The old chamberlain addressing Rama with familiar practice and then correcting himself out of fear.). See my URC., Intr. and Notes.

49. See, URC. III. 17, VI. 22.

50. URC. I. 39.

51. Cf. the observation of an anonymous critic :
कारुण्यं भवभूतिरेव तनुते ।

Govardhanacharya writes :

भवभूतेः सम्बन्धात् भूधरभूरेव भारती भाति ।
एतत्कृतकारुण्ये किमन्यथा रोदिति ग्रावा ॥

of his readers and give them deep delight[52], which is the reward of fine literature.

Kalidasa maintains a perfect balance of literary grace and stage art. So does Shudraka, though next only to Kalidasa. And Bhasa, lesser though in literary merit, is greater than either as a dramatist of the stage. Bhavabhuti turned out dramatic poems, rather than stage plays. In a way, he set a new trend which influenced the later Sanskrit dramatic literature. But the later dramatists did not have the ability and profundity which Bhavabhuti had.

52. The verdict of a Sanskrit critic is :
तथाप्यन्तर्मोदं कमपि भवभूतिर्वितनुते ।

CHAPTER SIX

BHAVABHUTI'S MIND AND THOUGHTS

(I)

CRITICS of literature aver that great literature carries the stamp of an author's personality. Through the experience he presents, the characters he creates, and their actions, thoughts and behaviour, the author's own preferences, his thoughts and ideals, and his outlook on life may be inferred. Literature is not a mirror, of course, to reflect an author's personality. But it is at least a clue to surmise how his mind works and what values of life and art he holds dear.

The information directly available about the poet's life and the literary allusions in his works show that Bhavabhuti was a deep scholar who had read extensively. He mentions a Paramahamsa Jnananidhi (lit. 'Treasure of Knowledge,) as his guru'[1]. The name is very significant for a learned teacher of a learned pupil. Bhavabhuti's dramatic works clearly reflect his study or close familiarity with various branches of ancient learning.

Born in a Brahmin family devoted to Vedic study and teaching, Bhavabhuti must have studied the Vedas, Vedangas, Ritual

1. MVC. I.5 :

श्रेष्ठः परमहंसानां महर्षीणां यथाङ्गिराः ।
यथार्थनामा भगवान् यस्य ज्ञाननिधिर्गुरुः ॥

works and the Upanishads, along with other philosophies like Samkhya and Yoga. The description of Valmiki's hermitage and of the activities of the pupils appears to be based on personal experience. The words of Janaka and Arundhati echo the utterances of Rigvedic poets; Lava's speech is characterized by a fine polish of Vedic training; and Rama's observation about the *garbhanataka* uses actual words from the Nirukta[2].

The mention of a twelve-year sacrificial session, Lava's description of the guards of the sacrificial horse and of Ashvamedha, Rama's use of the technical word *arthavada*, show Bhavabhuti's knowledge of Ritual literature and Purva-mimamsa. The title *Pada-vakya-pramana-jna* that Bhavabhuti had indicates his study of Grammar, Purvamimamsa and Nyaya (Logic).

Allusions to Vedanta philosophy are vivid. Madhava and Atreyi are introduced as students of philosophy. Janaka's reference to 'Sunless worlds' and the poet's use of the word *vivarta* and of vedantic similes would leave no doubt of Bhavabhuti's study of this important branch of philosophy[3]. Samkhya and Yoga he has himself mentioned[4]. And if Saudamini had acquired special yoga powers, Aghoraghanta and Kapalakundala were adept in Tantra Shastra. Valmiki's pupil uses the technical term *nigraha* (*sthāna*) in Nyaya as a weapon of argument. Close knowledge of Arthashastra (Science of Polity) is seen in the speeches of Malyavat and Shurpanakha[5].

In devising the role of Kamandaki and of Lavangika as a messenger of love, and in their speeches as well as that of Madayantika, Bhavabhuti shows his keen knowledge of Kamashastra. The actual mention of *Kamasutra* as one of the features of a

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2. See also Dr Raghavan's article : "Bhavabhuti and the Veda", *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay* (New Series), Vols. 31-32, 1956-57, published June 1959; pp. 218-221.

3. URC. III.47; IV. 3 ff.; VI. 6 etc.

4. MM. I.7.

5. See for detailed study Dr Raghavan's article, "Bhavabhuti and Arthasastra", Festschrift Walter Ruben zum 70, *New Indology*, Akademieverlag, Berlin 1971; pp. 433-439.

dramatic composition[6] is yet another evidence that Bhavabhuti had developed the course of love in the *Malatimadhava* on the lines of Vatsyayana's work.

The *Mahaviracharita* contains a number of technical terms from Ayurveda and a reference to surgical operation.

Bhavabhuti's study of Natyashastra and the profound influence on him of earlier poets, especially Valmiki whom he adores and Kalidasa whom he emulates, are quite apparent from his plays. And in all his writing is seen his command of Sanskrit language, which would justify his epithet *vashya-vak.*

Emotionally sensitive, religiously a devotee of Rama whom he equates with Brahman, but broad-minded enough to praise Shiva or Sun, Bhavabhuti appears to be essentially an intellectual.

The atmosphere of student life that he paints in his dramas may be a reflection of his personal experiences. Fun and enjoyment are possible on holidays; but essentially it is a life of intellectual discipline, moral and professional training, and education in values.

Bhavabhuti's description of the happiness of married love and of the joy that a child brings in life may either be a personal glimpse or an ideal that the poet earnestly upholds. The picture of ideal friendship and devotion that he has painted suggests that he may have been fortunate at least in this respect, though not in that of fame and material prosperity, which came to him late in life.

(II)

Bhavabhuti has expressed some significant ideas in his plays. They are, in a way, a clue to his mind and personality. They also have a thought-value which deserves to be considered.

(1) Love is an absorbing emotion of human life. Genuine love, Bhavabhuti thinks, is spontaneous. It is not contingent on conditions or causes. It is 'an affection of eyes'. It is sudden and irresistible. As Kalidasa pointed out earlier, it is seen in the entire creation. Two hearts are suddenly, unexpectedly drawn together; lotus blooms when sun-rays touch it; moonstone melts by the contact of moon's rays[7]; the peacock remembers his Kadamba;

6. MM. 1.4.
7. URC. VI. 12.

and the young elephant learns gestures of love without any schoolling[8]. The universality of this emotion binds the whole world by its silken thread. Young men and women, married couples, two friends, parents and children, even two strangers, are deeply involved in such affectionate relationship. And then the mutual exchange of words is full of sweetness, modesty, courtesy and blissful thoughts[9]. One often feels that such a gift of love is divine, possible only by the holy merit of previous life[10].

Bhavabhuti has very tender feelings for women whose mind, he says, is as delicate as a flower[11]. He is particularly touched by the spectacle of flower-like women being trampled under feet[12], their character maligned by worthless talk[13]. He quotes the authority of the *Kamasutra* to state that young women, delicate as they are, have to be approached with a tenderness. If roughly approached without creating trust in them they will come to hate union. But men may not behave like this. Girls from noble families are shy, innocent, untutored in the ways of love. To try to dominate them is like burning them with the fire of words. Such experience makes a young woman turn away from her husband's house and men are disgusted by the birth of daughters[14]. It is a stricture on male behaviour and a plea for understanding and affection in married relations.

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8. URC. III. 16, 18.
9. Cf. URC. II. 2[ab].
10. Cf. URC. I. 39[d].
11. Cf. MM. VII. 1.46 : 'कुसुमसधर्माणो हि योषितः ...'।
URC. VI. 12[d] : 'पुरन्ध्रीणां चित्तं कुसुमसुकुमारं हि भवति ।'
12. URC. I. 14 : नैसर्गिकी सुरभिणः कुसुमस्य सिद्धा
मूर्ध्नि स्थितिर्न चरणैरवताडनानि ।
13. URC. I. 5 : यथा स्त्रीणां तथा वाचां साधुत्वे दुर्जनो जनः ।
14. Cf. MM. VII. ll. 58-60, 68-72 :
'...योषितः सुकुमारोपक्रमाः । तासु अनधिगतविश्वासैः प्रसभमुपक्रम्यमाणाः सद्यः संप्रयोगविद्वेषिण्यो भवन्ति' एवं किल कामसूत्रकारा आमनन्ति । 'गृहे गृहे पुरुषाः कुलकन्यकाः समुद्वहन्ति । न खलु कोऽपि लज्जापराधीनं अनपराद्धं मुग्धसुकुमारस्वभावं कुलकुमारीजनं प्रभवामीति वाचानलेन प्रज्वालयति । एते खलु ते हृदयशल्यनिक्षेपा आमरणं संस्मर्यमाणदुःसहाः पतिगृहनिवासवैराग्यकारिणो महापरिभवा येषां कृते स्त्रीजन्मलाभं जुगुप्सन्ते बान्धवाः ।'

Bhavabhuti regards mutual love as the foundation of happy marriage[15]. Most of the Sanskrit poets have described the romance, thrill, and the maddening joy of love that leads to marriage. Bhavabhuti also has given poetic and emotional pictures of such love. But he probably stands alone in painting the glories of married love, which he idealizes through Rama and Sita. Married love is a unique feeling that brings a profound understanding of minds and an identity of souls between a husband and wife. It is a love that ripens with age and blossoms into an engulfing emotion. Age does not rob it of its thrill, nor does time destroy its flavour and bliss[16]. A couple bound by reciprocal love remains perpetually young in heart. A perfectly attuned couple is content with the silent company of each other, because each one of them is a priceless treasure to the other[17]. A palatial residence or a hut in a forest makes no difference to the joy and happiness of married life. Love is a power, and a tower of strength. For, the husband to a woman and the wedded wife to a man symbolise in mutual relation the dearest friend, the sum-total of all relatives, the fulfilment of all desires, a priceless treasure, in fact, life itself[18].

To Bhavabhuti, as to Kalidasa, married love is not complete without the bliss of a child. A child is a thread that sews and preserves worldly existence[19]. The child is a unique tie of joy, binding the inmost essence of the hearts of a father and mother[20]. It is a creation when all the limbs and the total body flow out into affection, and the two hearts are profoundly stirred and molten into a stream of delight[21]. Hence, a child is a true symbol of the union of the parents and expresses the acme of married love.

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15. Cf. MM. II.2.[15];, 'इतरेतरानुरागो हि दारकर्मणि परार्ध्यं मङ्गलम् ।'
16. URC. I. 39.
17. URC. II.19, VI. 5 :

    न किञ्चिदपि (v. l. अकिञ्चिदपि) कुर्वाणः सुखैर्दुःखान्यपोहति ।
    तत्तस्य किमपि द्रव्यं यो हि यस्य प्रियो जनः ॥
18. MM. VI. 18.
19. URC. VII (*garbhanataka*).
20. URC. III. 17.
21. URC. VI. 22.

(2) Bhavabhuti expresses some fine ideas about speech. On the creative side it is an expression of the highest truth, *Shabda-brahma*, which reveals itself to gifted men in a moment of spontaneous and inspired feeling, as it did to Valmiki[22]. Seers have a direct vision of such truth[23]. Their words never confound; meaning runs after their words; glory and bliss shine through them.[24] Good men may not be so fortunate as the seers; but their words are not a cloak for hiding thoughts[25]. The goddess of speech is, therefore, submissive to seers and to good men.

On the practical side, speech is the foundation of human life and behaviour[26]. Speech is an indication of a man's character. Culture and education give a fine flavour to one's words[27]. The words of the righteous are transparent with goodness and modesty and drip with honey[28]. Men should use their words carefully and try never to injure any one—a wife, a friend, or a stranger—with words[29]. Harsh words are demonaic, uttered through pride, hauteur or madness. Harsh speech is the birthplace of hatred and feud and will bring the destruction of hell[30]. As in creative effort so in wordly dealings, therefore, truthful and delightful speech is essential. Such speech is like the holy cow, the mother of bliss: It will yield all desires, pull misfortune away, produce renown

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22. See URC. II, Interlude.
23. URC. VII, *garbhanataka*, Intr. 'साक्षात्कृतधर्माणः ऋषयः।'
24. URC. IV. 18 : आविर्भूतज्योतिषां ब्राह्मणानां ये व्याहारास्तेषु मा संशयो भूत् ।
    भद्रा ह्येषां वाचि लक्ष्मीर्निषिक्ता नैते वाचं विप्लुतार्थां वदन्ति ॥
25. Cf. URC. I. 10 :

    लौकिकानां हि साधूनां अर्थं वागनुवर्तते ।
    ऋषीणां पुनराद्यानां वाचमर्थोऽनुधावति ॥
26. MM. II. 4. ff. वाक्प्रतिष्ठानि देहिनां व्यवहारतन्त्राणि ।
    वाचि पुण्यापुण्यहेतवो व्यवस्थाः सर्वथा जनानामायत्तन्ते ।
27. Cf. Sumantra's admiration for Lava's manner of speaking. URC. V
28. Cf. URC. II. 2. : प्रियप्राया वृत्तिः विनयमधुरो वाचि नियमः ।
29. Cf. MM. VII. ll. 68-72 (quoted under footnote No. 14).
30. URC. V. 29 :

    ऋषयो राक्षसीमाहुर्वाचमुन्मत्तदृप्तयोः ।
    सा योनिः सर्ववैराणां सा हि लोकस्य निर्ऋतिः ॥

and slay sin[31]. That is why Bhavabhuti advocates delicacy and sweetness in all human relations and dealings and abhors harshness[32] and cruelty.

(3) Bhavabhuti's literary opinions are personal. They explain the nature of his own writing and the progressive development of his views on literary art.

He records the story of the brith of Ramayana with loving care and admiration. It implies that moving poetry may neither be clever construction nor studied and dignified expression; it is a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. The centre of poetry is a poet's keenly sensitive heart which opens itself in emotionally charged language. And when to this awakening an intensely human approach is added, the material for great art is ready.

It is fortunate that, intellectually at least, Bhavabhuti rose to these heights of undertsanding.

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31. URC. V. 30 :
कामान् दुग्धे विप्रकर्षत्यलक्ष्मीं कीर्तिं सूते दुष्कृतं या हिनस्ति ।
तां चाप्येतां मातरं मङ्गलानां धेनुं धीराः सूनृतां वाचमाहुः ॥

32. MVC. II. 48. ff. : नृशंसता हि नाम पुरुषदोषः ।

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